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THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE

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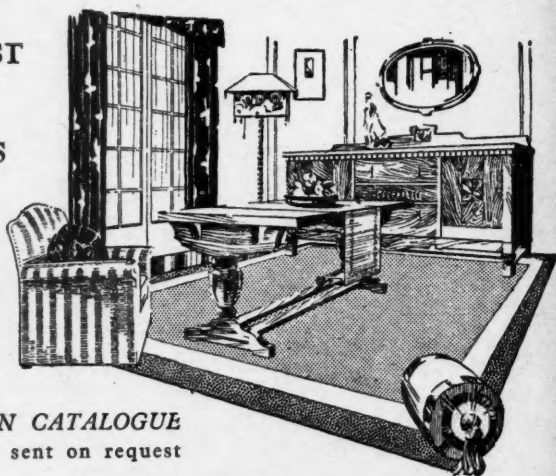
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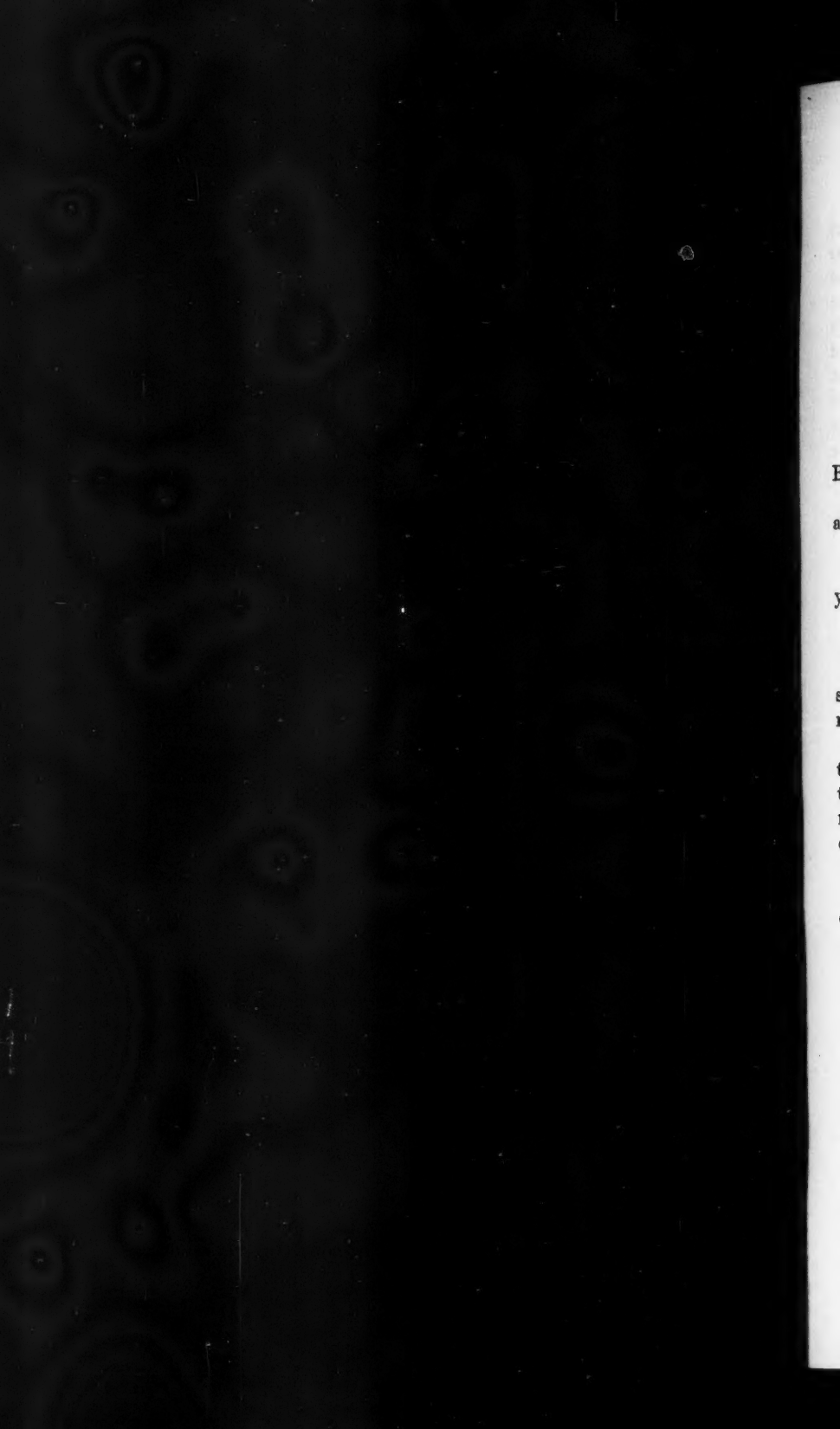
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THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

FEBRUARY 1929.

ON SOLWAY BRIDGE.

BY G. E. MITTON.

CHAPTER VIII. (*continued*).

BEDE sat down on a chair by his brother's bed.

'I didn't come so very far,' he said conversationally. 'I was at Bowness-on-Solway with a friend of mine.'

'Don't know it.'

'Neither did I until last summer. But tell me, what started you off on this illness?'

'Hasn't Ina told you?'

'She did.'

'Then there's no use talking of it. The horse has had to be shot, that's the worst part of it. Never knew him make such a mistake before, but the ground was like grease.'

The aridity of it stunned Bede. To be talking like this when that chasm of years was bridged at last! He knew himself to be too emotional, which made him put a stern guard on voice and manner, but Cuthbert obviously needed no guard—there was no emotion in him.

'Hard luck!' Bede commented mechanically.

There was a pause. Bede longed to get away; he saw he could make no further progress, and the loss of his most cherished and upholding illusion had made him wilt. Just as he was saying, 'But I mustn't tire you out,' Cuthbert asked:

'You've seen the children, of course?'

'Certainly. Jolly little things, especially Podge.'

Something softer glowed over the father's face for an instant, making him younger and more attractive.

'Cunning as they make them,' he said proudly, then added in cold justice, 'Perdita is clever too.'

After a few more words Bede left him.

The children lunched downstairs, together with their nursery governess, Miss Brown. They behaved admirably. Bede was interested in the curiously interwoven method of their upbringing.

In some ways they were rigidly drilled ; instant obedience, perfect table manners, absolute punctuality were exacted, but in other ways they were left free to follow their own inclinations to an extent that would have horrified his nurses and tutors. They were asked to take their choice of everything on the table as if they were of full age, and the choice was not by any means always of the richest or best dishes. Podge certainly enjoyed her food, but rather as a gourmet than a gourmand. She betrayed some evidence that lip-smacking and licking her spoon had been trimmed off her by severe methods, but she behaved well, only expressing her appreciation of any special morsel by rolling her eyes at her uncle, with a face like the celebrated Cheshire cat.

Perdita ate little. Having disposed of a cup of soup, she said she didn't want any meat.

'Just as you like,' said her mother serenely.

'I'd like to cut up one of those Jaffa oranges with my salad,' said this modern child.

Bede realised then that they were eating fresh green lettuce in Christmas week. That meant forcing-houses. His brother must be rich. His father would have considered it wicked to spend anything on such exotic luxuries.

'Very well,' Mrs. Delaval assented to her elder daughter, 'but don't be messy about it.'

Ina was very efficient in the way she managed her servants, her table, and her children. She wore a closely fitting knitted drab suit, that showed her firm rounded outlines. Her fair hair was well, but not elaborately, shingled, so that she had no suggestion of a hairdresser's advertisement about her.

'Can you drive a car, Bede?' she asked when luncheon was nearly over.

'I have driven all manner of cars.'

'Then you might take the children in the Singer, and go for a run along the coast this afternoon if you like.'

'Delighted. But won't they be cold?'

'Cold? They don't know what it is to be cold, they wear so little, the lucky brats!'

'Where shall we go, Uncle Bede?' asked Perdita.

He considered. 'To Bamfborough?'

'I don't like Bamfborough, it's too—well-dressed, no rags about it, or tears to peep through.'

'What then?'

'Dunstanborough.'

'Very well, Dunstanborough let it be. I think I share your tastes. Aren't you coming?' he asked his sister-in-law.

'No, I can't leave the house long, and Miss Brown and I have a good deal to do; the children will take care of you.'

Indeed they thought themselves quite capable of that.

After lunch Bede went round to the stable yard to look at the car. Perdita came with him as far as the great piers of the gate surmounted by stone balls. 'I am forbidden to go in the yard,' she explained. 'But it's a nice place. I like best Athy's end, where the horses are and the hay. I climbed down one of the racks from the loft one day and got out into the manger beside Brandy. He was astonished. He wanted to know if I was good to eat.'

Then she saw Athy, a tall and gaunt Northumbrian, with a face hollowed by age as by fine sculpture, and she called out to him to let loose the retriever who was prancing at the end of his chain.

'A'll dee that, and a deal more for ye, my bonny bud,' he said, with the freedom of a north-country retainer, and as Bede drew near he asked confidentially: 'Ye'll not be so far in the Master's confidence as to get him to run a pony for Miss Perdita now?'

Bede shook his head, smiling, and looked round, but Perdita was no longer hanging on to the gate-pier wistfully, but leaping among the trees, with a delighted dog curving round her in great arcs.

They all three packed into the front seat of the car. Before they were clear of the drive Perdita began: 'We won't jog your elbow, Uncle Bede. I know all about it, because Gibson lets me drive sometimes.'

'She just puts her hand on the wheel,' said Podge with contempt; 't isn't drivin'.'

They drove the car over the short rough grass near to the grand ruin of the castle, and leaving it there, walked across, the children skipping like kids.

It was a mild day and very still, the sea, steely-grey, just lipped the sands in the wide bay of Embleton to the right.

They climbed to the very edge of the sharply-cut chasm above which the jagged ruin rears itself defiantly, and in the thunder of the wash over the stones below held each other's hands, as they peered over the black precipice. The volume of the tide, with a great lift and heave, rolled in growling, so that the wet stones, thrust over and over countless times, were like large footballs.

'There's a dear wildness about all this land,' said Perdita presently, as she sat back on her heels, and surveyed the grey, misty sea horizon; 'but in this chasm it is fierce, every bit of it—it has no mercy.' She looked searchingly up at Bede, her eyes earnest, and her neat little cropped head, so trim and small, differing in every way from Podge's large leonine mane, just below him.

After watching a while they drew back, and wandered on the turf heights, with Podge dancing ahead.

'You knew it when you were a little boy, Uncle Bede?' said Perdita. 'Did you love it as much as I do?'

'Quite as much, I think.' He hesitated; he wanted to tell her that he came alive the first time he got over that vast distance as it seemed then—how it had shrunk now!—and reached the sea alone. Why should he not? In this child of nine he recognised a friend, a mind in tune with his own; she knew nothing of life, but she thought and felt. That was it—feeling counted for more than anything; those who felt, learnt from life, the others never did.

He tried to explain to her, and she listened breathlessly. 'Oh, Uncle Bede,' she said when he ended. 'That's real talk; no one ever talks like that in life. I know all you say, only of course I have always had the sea, because when we were quite little, mother took us there, so I can't remember its first bursting on me.'

'It wasn't quite that. I had had the sea too, but it was when I managed to get to it alone by myself, as if I'd discovered it for the first time.'

'Yes, only I'm never here alone, there's always Podge,' she said thoughtfully. 'Podge is such a very little girl, she should be paddling or lapping milk—in her mind I mean.'

Bede laughed.

'Why do you laugh? I always want to know why people laugh, laughing's so precious, and there isn't enough of it.'

'I laughed because you're funny.'

'I didn't mean to be funny.'

'That's a characteristic of all true humour.'

She twisted up her small face comically, trying to understand, then caught his hand that hung alongside and kissed it. 'I *do* like you!' she cried rapturously.

'I am glad you love it all so,' he said presently. 'When I am not here I sometimes make pictures of it in my mind, and see the little things as I knew them when I was small. I can shut my

eyes, and get the outline of any bit of the garden or house, and even of things farther out, such as Dunstanborough.'

'It's the best sort of seeing. One doesn't want spectacles to see the pictures of the mind, or telescopes either; one can see close in, very, very small, or right far away as clear as possible.'

'Do you talk to your mother like this?'

'No, except when a bit slips over the edge of my mind before I mean it to. My mind sometimes gets so full. Mother doesn't like me, but I don't mind, I know her so well.'

'That's profound.'

'I'm so glad.'

'You aren't a bit like your father,' said Bede, suddenly, 'but Podge is.'

'Poor Podge!' said Perdita in a tone of such genuine commiseration that he could hardly check unseemly laughter.

Then they went down to Beadnell Bay curving like a scimitar by the grey sea which was almost as flat, this windless day. Perdita left her uncle's side, and dashed forward, racing along, throwing her thin little arms in graceful loops above her head, leaping high, so that it seemed as if she remained poised for seconds in the air, a thing of ethereal grace and fire and vitality.

Bede stood to watch her; she was quite unself-conscious, and was acting purely for the joy of action, not for applause. Her little nut-like head rose and fell, and turned on the neck in unison with the movements, the arms rippled in their full length, the long thin fingers made curves as sinuous and fascinating as those of any Burmese girl; the child at last got so far that she became a mere gnat, dancing like the gnats in the warm spring air ascending from the ground, which carries them up and helps their gyrations.

Then Podge suddenly started, and took the part of the clown; she began, with short, stumpy legs and little square-ended hands, to run and leap—about two inches off the ground—and fling herself about, until she came down plump, and sat looking backwards so comically that Bede ran and picked her up, and they both shouted aloud with laughter.

'You're laffin' at me, laffin' at me,' said Podge, squeezing up his mouth with her soft fat hands, and shouting herself. 'Mustn't laff at me.'

When Perdita rejoined them, with long springing leaps, toes forward, body poised, arms balanced, her face glowed and her eyes shone. 'I love it so, I love it,' she panted.

There was one object in the house at Dalness that affected Bede more poignantly than any other, but he was wise enough not to show it openly. He had not yet attained the blissful calm which comes from the negation of all feeling, nor was he strong enough to own to feelings considered far out of date, so he resorted to guile.

The first evening of his stay at Dalness he and Ina had sat in the small morning-room, and it was not until he returned from the expedition to Dunstanborough that he was able to go into the drawing-room, where tea was set. When he had received his cup he said cunningly, 'I have noticed that Perdita is so like that picture of my mother hanging between the windows.'

Ina looked at him, smiling. 'It is more like you,' she answered. But even as she said it she noted how his lips set, forming that intractable look of the mouth, differing so widely from the sweet mouth of the woman in the portrait.

Her remark gave him the opportunity to get up and stare hard at the oil painting which had, all his life, stood for the mother he had never known.

'It is perhaps true,' he agreed. 'Though the colouring and features are like Perdita, there is not the merry look that comes and goes in her eyes.'

The face was that of a wistful woman of about thirty, her small head crowned with thick masses of dark hair, her features attractively irregular, and her expression rather set, as if the expectancy in her eyes must be held in check.

'You don't remember her?' Ina asked.

'No; I was about two when she died. She came from the Isle of Skye. She was a Macleod. I always mean to hunt up any relations there may be there some day.'

After tea Bede saw his brother again, and heard at great length the whole account of the tedious dispute about the ditch.

'You could dig another ditch this side,' he said uninterestedly.

'I could, and I could obey Mr. Compton in all things, but I'm not going to,' said Cuthbert. 'It's been that way all our father's time, and for aught I know grandfather's too; it's absurd; it's miles from the man's house. If he'd been a decent fellow, one of us, I wouldn't have minded, but he made his money in the War, and it was bad enough when he bought poor Berkeley's land. You remember that Berkeley's two sons were killed in the War and he died of a broken heart? And that Compton should think what

was good enough for Berkeley and my father and me, isn't good enough for him—it's insolence, that's what it is.'

Some men living in a comparatively narrow environment, and rarely getting outside a limited circle, manage to keep alive and broadminded because they bring into that circle ideas from larger spheres and adapt them; their minds range while their bodies are more or less stationary, but Cuthbert was not like this; he was growing narrower and more dogmatic year by year; nothing interested him outside his own immediate property or the property of his near neighbours.

All the while Bede sat considering him, wondering whether he had always been like this, more or less, or whether he had changed. He was ready to admit to himself now that Ina could not have been the main cause of change; he had got as far as that in two days.

He was to leave at ten o'clock the next morning, and after breakfast he went up to say good-bye to Cuthbert. Some letters were lying on the eiderdown of the bed, and when a brief good-morning had been said, Cuthbert took up one of them.

'This concerns you,' he said. 'It's lucky it came just now; saves me writing another letter. It's from Cousin Robert.'

Bede read it. It was very short, merely asking Cuthbert for his brother's address, and with formal good wishes to him and his family.

'Looks promising,' said Cuthbert, with his dry laugh; 'perhaps he'll leave you something. He must be eighty-eight. I know that, for my father always said he was ten years the junior, and he would have been seventy-eight.'

'I don't suppose he has anything to leave,' said Bede by way of saying something.

'Possibly not; I always understood he had spent all he had on that rubbishy collection of flint arrow-heads he has. Beats me how men can be such fools.'

CHAPTER IX.

MR. HANAPER'S manner toward Bede Delaval had noticeably changed when they met again. It was no longer the courteous and formal manner of an employer toward an employee, it was the manner of one man to another.

'Hullo,' he exclaimed, rising, with outstretched hand, when

Bede came into his private room about ten o'clock on Friday morning. 'Your brother is all right, then?'

'Thanks, yes. I was much obliged to you for sending on the wire.'

Mr. Hanaper was standing before the fireplace; he now gazed out of the window, as was his habit when he was going to say something a little embarrassing.

'How do you stand as regards the property? Next in succession?'

'No, no. My brother has children, two daughters; if he had had no family I should have inherited it, if I outlived him, under my father's will.'

'I see. Women come into everything nowadays; equal rights and all the privileges.'

Though Mr. Hanaper did not own a rood himself, he came of the land-holding classes, and was included among the people to whom this form of property, at once the oldest and the most limited, has a certain sanctity. This little episode when Bede had been summoned to his brother's bedside had placed him in a new light, and from that time forward Joshua Stampfield had no more power to stand between.

Bede, who was extremely sensitive as to atmosphere, felt the change at once, and knew that he could now safely talk on matters that did not concern his office work, so he gave an animated account of the goose-shooting expedition, and for the first time since he had joined the staff lost all self-consciousness when with his chief.

When they had discussed Bowness, Mr. Hanaper said suddenly, 'For some time past I've been considering the question of asking you to undertake the next volume of the "Gazetteer" as editor. Markham has resigned all claim to it and is going abroad.'

'We are through, except for a few returned sheets with printer's queries,' said Bede.

'Just so, and the sooner we get in hand the material for Scotland the better. The matter for England took Markham seven years to collect, he says, but he did it in a leisurely way. An active, energetic man might "get" Scotland in a year. A great deal of it would be patient and diligent research work, but some would have to be collected on the spot. It's not exactly the season to start up there, but I expect you'll want to do some of that sort first. The sooner the better. What do you think of it?'

'Suit me down to the ground,' said Bede, face and voice kindling.

'It's not easy to fix up exactly as to remuneration. We can't give *carte blanche* as regards expenses. It might be best for you to have a small car. What you would save in hotel outlay by getting over the ground quicker would probably go far toward the cost.'

'I should say it would.'

'Then there's the question of whether it would be best for you to work on a fixed salary or get a lump sum to include expenses. What's your own idea?'

'If you are prepared to stand the cost of the car, and will allow me a month to go over some of the ground, I think I could name a sum per month to cover everything, including my own salary.'

'That would be most satisfactory to me. How soon can you get away?'

'In a couple of weeks. Say by the end of January.'

'Right.'

When Bede left that room he knew he had taken a definite step upward. He could now afford to disregard Joshua Stampfield. He would be free to come and go as he pleased in unrestricted intercourse with his chief.

He sat staring out of the dusty window of the 'Gazetteer' room as he thought of the work opening out before him—work that would bring with it days in the country he loved, the country of the Borders. Perdita's words rang in his mind: 'The dear wildness of it.'

There was much truth in them; there was something akin between himself and Perdita. Probably he had received it from the mother he had never known, and she from her father. Woman to man and man to woman. Thus the heritage ran. From this thought rose another. He would be able in course of time to fulfill one of his dearest wishes and visit the country from which his mother sprang. Skye had always called him as a dreamland, and never until now had he realised the means of going there.

Thereafter Bede was kept hard at work, but knowing that he would soon be returning to the North he thought he had better go down and see his old cousin at Kingston before leaving. It was uncivil to ignore altogether the overture which had been made.

He was not inclined to be too cordial to Cousin Robert, who had always been selfish, and rather disagreeable in manner; but now that he was so rich in friends, with Lawrence Hatherton and

Perdita written in his roll, he could afford to be kindly to an old man who had cast him off when he most needed sympathy and advice, and now wished to pick him up again.

Therefore, after a preliminary letter, he made his way to Kingston-on-Thames on the Saturday a week later. He had been asked to stay 'one night,' specified, so that he might not make the mistake of thinking the week-end was intended. He arrived with his small suit-case in hand at the little red-brick house, one of a row backing on the river.

The door was opened by a substantially built woman, a good deal above middle age, who wore no distinctive dress, and yet was unmistakably the nurse in charge of the old man. She had nothing in common with the well-trained and good-class nurses of to-day, who, in the vast changes wrought by the War, have taken higher rank, and have to face far severer tests than their predecessors.

Miss Selina Borrick made up by pretentiousness for lack of training, and had drifted into her present occupation on very slender qualifications indeed. She was a woman with a dingy complexion and a full-lipped mouth; her eyes, at once threatening and cringing, measured Bede Delaval as he stood before her; it was quite clear to him, with his sensitive perceptions, that she considered she had staked a claim in that house.

Generally, Bede suffered from that most dangerous tendency, an inclination to think indiscriminately well of his fellow creatures. From the obvious perils to which this laid him open he was sometimes saved by self-protective instincts, warning him of anything gross or vile. The woman before him could not be called vile perhaps, but she was certainly gross; moreover, she belonged too nearly to the class to which Carrie belonged for him to be easy in her presence.

Robert Morris was sitting in the first-floor room, which had a large window opening at the back on to the river. In spite of his age he had a thick crop of white hair, which, with his beard and moustache, covered up most of his face, except the penetrating eyes beneath shaggy brows. In outline, his grand square head and the way his hair grew gave him a resemblance to Darwin, but he had a flabby, protruding body and tiny, shrunken legs. He was seated in a great winged armchair, and half rose as he gave Bede one of those limp hands which contradict any welcome in words, and chill a newcomer.

'Glad you were able to come. Find us very quiet, but only for a night——'

Bede seated himself by the broad window, with its small iron balcony, and looked at him.

'It's very good of you to ask me. I told you your letter reached me when I was at Dalness.'

'Thought you and Cuthbert were not on speaking terms?'

Bede coloured. 'I was there,' he said doggedly, admitting nothing. 'Cuthbert has been ill, but is on the mend now.'

'What did he say to you when he handed you my letter?'

The old man's eyes narrowed to mere slits, and twinkled wickedly.

Bede, remembering what *had* been said, was at a disadvantage. For the moment he did not speak.

'I can guess what was said, well enough. Everyone for himself is the only game to play. I've played it long enough, the Lord knows; always for a lone hand; no one has ever had the right to share *my* roof.'

A pang of melancholy echoed in the room at these words. Some half a century ago this man had had a wife, who had lived for some years; she was not only forgotten, but the very episode had passed from his mind and was as if it had never been. Yet he too in his time must have uttered the sweet words of devotion.

'That woman, Selina Borrick,' he went on, twisting himself round in his chair to see that the door was shut, 'thinks she'll marry me, but she won't. She's listening now, I shouldn't wonder.' A pause, as if he expected an infuriated Selina to dash in and deny it. 'No matter, she shan't do as she likes with me. Well, I sent for you to have a look at you. Not for any other reason, mind.'

Bede laughed. There was something of infantile cunning in his cousin's manner that was more fitly treated with laughter than offence.

'Not that I'm going to die,' said Robert Morris grandly. 'I shall live to be a hundred. Never smoked in my life, never drank. That's it. That, and always enjoyed my food. Do now. Then there's my collection of prehistoric antiquities, finest in England. A man with a hobby like that can't die. It's in the room below here, most of it; some, alas! has to be in the attic. What can one do? We'll go round 'em to-morrow. The B.M. has its eye on them; sent a man down to see me the other day to have a look at 'em. Thinks I'll make a bequest to the nation in my will

Be blowed if I will ; why should I ? Didn't say so, though. Like to see them licking round the edge of the saucer ; but they didn't send the right sort to do the licking. Lordy, he *was* an official ! Tried to show me he knew more about the subject than I did. Fool ! They should have instructed him beforehand—if they wanted to make a good impression, I mean. People don't understand that. If you want to get on my right side, you'll pretend you know nothing about fossils.'

'No need to pretend,' said Bede, taking the last sentence personally.

'Oh, you mean about flints and relics ? Well, I don't expect you to know about *them*.'

'I don't think I know much about anything.'

'Eh, but you ain't canny either. That's not the way to do it. You should pretend you're a desperate cute chap about lots of things, and then turn round and learn of me on my special subject. See ?'

Bede was delivered from the necessity of replying by the maid-servant coming in to lay the table, superintended by Nurse Borrick. But their appearance did not check the old man's garrulity.

'You can see my punt out there,' he said, indicating the window. 'Soon as ever the weather's decent I'm going fishing. Get her towed up to Monkey Island or thereabouts. You know Monkey Island ? I have rights there as an old Etonian ; must be the oldest that still angles. Very polite they are to me, the boys ; different from my time, not such bucks, but a deal more sure of themselves. Yes,' he repeated, his eye turned sideways on his nurse, 'I'm going fishing.'

'You're a silly old man,' she said, with a familiarity that came rather startlingly from her. 'Come along and eat your fish, and don't talk about catching it, or I'll warrant you'll catch a deal more than you bargained for.'

It was a simple meal of the high-tea order, and during its progress Robert Morris did most of the talking. He talked a great deal about fishing, which had been his main outdoor pastime throughout life. He was obviously quite determined to go off again in his punt directly the season opened.

His brain was as clear as ever, and he listened to Bede's account of the haaf-net fishing at Bowness, with shrewd comment and comparison ; then he gave some reminiscences of his own days among the North-country becks. Selina Borrick said little, but

she regarded the small old man with a proprietary air that irritated Bede. Afterwards, when he had been to his room to fetch his pipe, and was returning, he heard her say, 'Well, ducky, so long as I'm here, you'll be all right,' which struck him as grimly unpleasant.

The next morning was spent in a long and dreary examination of countless flints, palæolithic and neolithic alike, each one of the labelled contents on the trays in the cabinets below being handled and explained. To Bede, who secretly thought anyone might go out on the Downs and pick up any number of such things, broken by wind and weather, and label them as prehistoric weapons, the show was not amusing. All through the proceedings a running commentary was kept up on the British Museum and its officials, and how they wanted the owner to present the collection to the nation, or at any rate to leave it as a bequest, and how he intended they should sit up and pipe in vain!

After the midday dinner the old man snored in his chair, and Bede, stepping out of a side door from above the entrance stage of the house, went down to the foreshore, lying forlorn under a dribbling rain that was hardly sufficient to wet anyone, but blurred the far bank. There he stood, looking around at the white painted wood of galleries and balustrades now sadly needing a new coat, and imbibing the dismal suggestion of summer outings from various rusty-looking boats that had not been put into shelter for the winter.

He stood immovable for a long time, gazing meditatively at the grey flood of water slipping away and away to the sea. Suddenly his thoughts were launched on it, and he was carried along with it to that awful scene by the Solway. It was at least a sinister coincidence that had made him stand once again by a volume of such water, when one of the figures that had floated spectrally into that vision was sleeping within a few yards of him!

A pang of unendurable discomfort shook him. What had induced him to include Cousin Robert—?

Then he pulled himself up short. If he could think like that automatically, it was surely an admission that he believed in his vision and all its implications. If he believed in it, where did that carry him at last?

That cursed compact! But he had made no compact, had admitted nothing, he told himself frantically.

Yet he could not deny that since that day, still not a year ago,

his circumstances had been greatly improved, and the chief incubus of his life had been removed by death. His conscientious analytic mind went farther still. Would he, if he could, renounce the unholy compact, if compact it were, and start again where he had been, with Carrie his wife still living and himself obscured behind the great bulk of Joshua Stampfield ?

No, he could not say that ; he could not go back, and so long as he could not, what was he to think but that he had drifted onward to that last surrender, of his own will and wish ?

When Bede was back in London, going up to his work on Monday morning, his spirits rose to think how soon he was to be quit of these streets. Long as he had lived in London, her spirit had always been inimical to him. Perhaps it was because he was basically hostile to her. He sat on the top of his omnibus and considered the great city in her superficial aspect. He saw the wavering line of taxi-cabs drifting forward when released from a hold-up, only to stop again a few yards on. Wedged in the middle was a little butcher's cart with a smart horse looking so incongruous in that welter of mechanism, just as a car had looked incongruous amid the welter of horse-drawn vehicles a comparatively few years ago. It was a dreary, dripping, icy day, yet that kind of irregular grandeur in which London specialises was not altogether obscured ; that had to be acknowledged even if one were unfriendly to her in spirit.

Her roofs and buildings were of the finest and meanest, her shop windows as irregular in height and width as her roofs ; nothing was made to pattern, but all was due to growth and accident, as was the constitution of the country of which she was the capital.

Gaudy placards were plastered over the drab walls of the theatres, so huge that they made walkers in the street below into Lilliputians. A strange hurly-burly of conflicting interests and overlapping worlds was this city.

As he saw London that day so he was to remember her for long.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT we secretly fear and yet defy draws us to itself in a desire to prove that we are not afraid. Thus it happened that Bede Delaval, who had now been established in rooms in Edinburgh for

some weeks, finding himself with nothing particular to do one Saturday afternoon in March, drifted down to the docks at Leith to look at the sea. Not that he feared the sea, for he loved it, yet from the sea had been drawn the great menace of his life.

The captain of the dockyard had given him the freedom of the docks, and he had often wandered there. Yet the sea he found here had nothing in common with the sea that had thundered beneath Solway Bridge when he stood on it a year ago. These segments of grey water, neatly enclosed, looked like empty ball-rooms, displaying shining floors on which there was none to dance. Here and there a rusty craft, battered and briny, with her only note of coquetry in her scarlet or striped black and white funnel, lay alongside the wharf, just breathing with the occasional ripples raised by slight puffs of intermittent wind.

The gulls above floated lazily, gorged with rich and decaying food, and by their indolent wing movements showed themselves debased by fat living. The whole dockyard contained a quality of quietude within the ranges of its long grey sheds this afternoon ; the stillness was only broken by the low rumble of a distant lorry or the footfall of someone crossing the open spaces. Very different was it from the scene of life and movement on a busy day.

Bede loitered along, peering into the docks, until he came to one where a steamer belonging to the Danish-Iceland line was discharging butter kegs. They rolled one after the other down a plank gangway like a herd of little fat white pigs. Fish and oil, reinforced by faint whiffs of drying sacking, filled the air.

A girl was sitting a little apart from the few men who, with conscious rectitude of Saturday afternoon workers, were seeing to the cargo, and she seemed to have nothing to do with them or it. With much attention Bede watched her for some time, puzzled by her presence and her inaction. She was in the shadow of the great shed, seated on an upended cask, and she drooped a little forward, set in a pose of an extraordinary stillness. He could see her neck above a little wisp of black fur collarlet she wore, but he could see nothing else, until, moved by an impulse, he walked slowly past her.

She looked up, fixing him with a dark sad glance that brought him to a standstill, asking conventionally as he raised his hat, ' Can I help you ? '

' I've lost my bag,' she answered, in a soft, fluent tone, with the merest suspicion of a foreign accent.

'How did you do that?'

'I was coming down the gangway from the steamer, and my foot slipped. I caught at the rail, but, oh la, la! Before I knew it the bag had run off my wrist into the black water.'

Bede glanced up at the hull of the Danish ship reared above them, and then down into the thickened water defiled by filth.

'Can't it be recovered?'

'No. They say it's hopeless. It's drowned in the mud.'

'And how long have you been here?'

'Hours!' she replied, with a dramatic reinforcement of the hands.

'Why not go into the town and get something to eat?'

'You don't understand! All my money was in that bag.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Bede, and his eye fell involuntarily on a shiny black suit-case beside her on the ground.

'And my papers,' she added after a minute, her eyes searching his face with a scrutiny that was painful.

'How did they let you land, then?'

'They had gone through the papers on board before we were allowed to land,' she explained.

'And where have you come from?'

'Guess.'

He was influenced by the idea of the steamer near them. 'Denmark,' he hazarded.

She bowed.

'You are not English, then?'

'My mother was English.'

'You have, no doubt, friends or relations in Edinburgh? Shall I help you to find them?'

'I know no one here; I have no relations in the world.'

'Indeed?' he exclaimed, startled, and becoming faintly aware of a chasm opening before him. 'Why did you come over, then?'

'The wicked Bolsheviks killed my father.'

'Not recently?'

'Not very recently; but after that I lived with my mother; now she is dead, so I came to her country to get work.'

As he hesitated, much at a loss, she went on, 'I am a Princess.'

It was perhaps some faint association of underlying ideas that made him exclaim, 'You are a Russian?'

She bowed again. 'We lived just over the border in Poland, mother and I,' she explained. 'I got out by Dantzic, from there

to "Kopnhvn," and so I came to look for work. I speak French beautifully, for I was at school in Switzerland; and I play music divinely.'

Bede laughed. 'All the gifts in creation won't help you to get a cup of tea at this moment,' he said; 'but I will guarantee you one. Come to my landlady, and we will ask her advice as to what you should do. She is a practical woman.'

The girl rose to her feet. 'I have still some clothes,' she remarked inconsequently, and she allowed Bede to take up what an American would have called her hand-grip. Together they left the docks, and no man hindered them.

Bede had been lodging for the last two months in Leith Terrace with Mrs. Doig, a born and bred Edinburgh 'body.' She was small, with a queer, lined face, and the signs of an original character oozing out all over her. Her chief joy in life was to mother young men of any social standing, and Bede had completely won her carefully concealed heart.

When he reached the house, he hastened to pay the cabman and get the newcomer safely into his own front sitting-room, before going down into the basement, not without considerable trepidation, to face his landlady. To ring the bell and order tea was never for a moment in his thoughts.

He burst in upon Mrs. Doig with a confused story of a Russian Princess, who had arrived in a steamer and lost her bag.

'Did anybody ever hear the like of that?' commented Mrs. Doig, who knew full well that the young lady in question was at that moment under her own roof. 'But you'll not be having any truck with that sort—you such a God-fearing young man.'

He reddened and felt sheepish. 'She was there all by herself, with no money and no friends,' he said breathlessly. "Knowing you are the kindest-hearted woman in Scotland, I——"

'What did you do, now?'

'I—I brought her along to get a cup of tea and to ask your wise advice——'

'You don't mean to tell me that you've got her along with you at this very minute?' She peered behind him.

'She's in my sitting-room, and if you'd just make us a cup of your famous——'

'In my house she is, and you, a young unmarried man, bringing strange women along with you! Did you ever hear the like of that for impudence?'

'Oh, but indeed, Mrs. Doig, if you'd just see her, you'd know she is all right; you are so kind.'

'All this gammon is to make me take up with a young woman picked up anywhere. I cannot abide foreigners, nasty, sly creatures; it's all one—they're dirty, the best of them.'

'That is all there is to say about it, then. I must tell her to go to the workhouse.'

'She seems to have made a mighty impression on you anyway,' commented Mrs. Doig, who was never loath to savour a little excitement. 'Maybe she's no that bad. What's she to look at?'

'Come upstairs and see her.'

The girl was standing by the fire with a white, drawn face when Mrs. Doig entered the upstairs room, and at that very instant she shivered; whether this was deliberate or not, at any rate it secured the cup of tea.

Mrs. Doig had much more common sense than her lodger, and in her candid talk with him afterwards, as to what was to be done with this waif, she expressed herself pointedly. Though the tale might be true, it was none of their business to pick up stray aliens, and by doing so they might get themselves into trouble with the police.

'Her papers must have been in order,' Bede explained quickly, 'or she would never have been allowed to leave the steamer.'

'No doubt, but it's safest with that sort to put them in quarters where they're bound to run straight.'

'What quarters?'

'Well, there's the Girls' Friendly Society lay themselves out for just such. I've paid my money to them many a year, and would consider I was getting a bit back if they took this young lady off out of your sight.'

However, it had begun to rain with that devastating torrent which sweeps clean the streets of the northern capital in a twinkling, and Mrs. Doig was prevailed upon to harbour the waif for one night. This, of course, involved two, as nothing of a business nature could take place on the Sabbath.

She consented reluctantly. 'If I wasn't here to see to it,' she said in her plain-spoken way, 'you'd be meat for every trollop in this city.'

Bede went back triumphant to tell of his victory.

'By the way,' he said, when he had explained that Mrs. Doig was making ready her best bedroom, 'you have not told me your name yet.'

'My name is Loosha Melikoff.'

The euphony of it delighted him, and he said so, telling her his own name in exchange.

When Loosha came down after an interval, ready for the evening meal, she had undergone a transformation which, if it had occurred earlier, would have effectually barred her from even the grudging favour Mrs. Doig had accorded.

Her dark hair was flat and smooth to her head, but her face was completely coated with fine powder of a whitish buff colour, in startling contrast with her carmine lips. She had on a canary yellow slip, of the envelope shape, with bare arms, and her long legs encased in yellow silk were very prominent.

Bede was too much embarrassed to speak.

She laughed with wicked enjoyment. 'Yes indeed, but this is me!' she cried. 'The little miserable one you rescued was not Loosha. When I have the use of a good piano I will show you my gratefulness in another way, but for the present I can only delight the eye.'

So far was she from 'delighting the eye' that, at the moment, he actually had a wild idea of making some excuse of showing her a picture so as to get her behind the folding screen before 'the girl' came in to lay the table.

But he abandoned this as impracticable, and from the little maid's stolidity realised she was so much in earnest over her job that she never looked up. She set places for two.

Mrs. Doig did not appear to ask if all was to his liking, as she usually did, and Bede wondered what she would have to say to the cosmetics. He was soon to know. Loosha ate heartily, but with discrimination; she evidently enjoyed his palpable embarrassment, and talked and laughed, continually looking at him. When they had finished, the little maid coming in to clear away, said: 'Mrs. Doig will be wantin' to speak to you, sir.'

'Very well, let her come in.'

'She will be wantin' ye to go to her ain room,' said the girl, using the future tense, in Scots fashion.

He went.

Mrs. Doig, in the awful majesty which five-foot-nothing can assume, was waiting for him.

'I'm not saying it's your blame,' she began severely. 'But it's aye a gamble to pick up what others let fall, and so it has proved. That hissy with her Jezebel face is no better than she

should be, and so I warn you. I had my doubts soon's I set eyes on her, but she was that forlorn and gentle it sort of went past me. But when I met her coming prancing down my stairs in her true character, then I understood I had done wrong. I tell you, for it's like enough a God-fearin' young gentleman like you hasn't overmuch acquaintance with her like.'

'You mean, Mrs. Doig, that because the poor young lady has used a little face-powder you condemn her utterly? But it's done everywhere now, even in the best circles.' He laughed.

'Maybe so, maybe not—it is not for me to judge, not being acquaint with such as you name; but I tell you that one must go out of my house.'

He was dismayed.

'How can she go, Mrs. Doig? On a Saturday night too.'

'It's misfortunate certainly.'

'You promised at least to let her stay over the Sunday. I'll see the G.F.S. folk on Monday and make arrangements for her to be taken in somewhere.'

He had to use all his powers of persuasion, for he had come up against the granite of conscious virtue than which none is more impenetrable. Had he not been a prime favourite he would not have carried his point; having carried it he was far from comfortable. He liked Mrs. Doig too well to submit easily to the iron coldness with which he knew he would be treated until the cause of offence was dismissed.

He returned to his small sitting-room badly ruffled. The things had been removed from the table, and Loosha was smoking a cigarette she had taken from his case.

'She doesn't like me,' she said with a sort of aggrieved innocence. 'We are not of the same kind, she and I. But you are not angry with me?'

'No,' he said in perplexed dismay.

A soft, slender hand shot out to his, and held it. 'But you look—so, so—and your brow is tight down; do not be so. Perhaps you too wish that I should remain ugly?'

(To be continued.)

MY VISIT TO THOMAS HARDY.

A MEMORABLE DAY AT 'MAX GATE.'

BY W. M. PARKER.

It was the month of September 1920. Far and wide the heaths, the downs, and the vales of the Wessex country offered an aspect of continual flux. They were undergoing that subtle transformation from the first, faint tones of autumn to the stage when the season becomes conspicuous by its rich panoply of russet. Days of dull weather had made way for those of sunshine splendour; and reminiscence of summer yet lingered in the warm air that accompanied their advent. A walking tour through the Hardy country had been my objective in coming down to Dorchester, which I had made my headquarters. From that centre one could set out north, south, east, and west, and reach, within reasonable distance and time, most of the landmarks associated with the Wessex novels.

In the evening of a certain day, during which I had been tramping from early morning till late evening over hills and fields to Poxwell, and had returned across the entire ridge of Bincombe and White Horse Downs, I arrived back at the 'Antelope' Hotel. There I found awaiting me a note from Mrs. Hardy, inviting me to call and partake of afternoon tea at 'Max Gate.' I had but to write an acceptance, and within two days I should be in the presence of the greatest imaginative genius of modern times. It seemed incredible! But there, indeed, lay the definite passport to the literary shrine at which I most longed to pay reverent homage.

On the appointed afternoon I set out on the momentous expedition. The day was warm, but a light wind tempered the atmosphere. 'Max Gate,' situated in Alington Avenue, on the Wareham road, stood about a mile out of Dorchester. I had left the hotel at four o'clock, and I found myself at the gate of the house a quarter of an hour before the arranged time, half-past four. I walked up and down the Wareham road, observing the remarkable seclusion of the house, surrounded by high walls and thick trees on every side; and, though but a mile from Dorchester town, it was, in truth, 'far from the madding crowd.' It looked an ideal retreat for a man of letters of hermitical disposition. The house had been

erected upon a spot, underneath which lies the dust of many Roman legions. With the pride of a keen antiquarian and archaeologist, Hardy himself used to refer to the unearthing of several noteworthy specimens of Roman relics in these grounds. Near by there is the site of an old Roman villa as well as of an old toll-house, for 'Max Gate' had been a turnpike in the good old days. On the opposite side of the road lay what is said to be the largest meadow in England—some three thousand acres in extent.

When the time was up, I at last surmounted my hesitancy, passed through the large, white, swing-to gate, and walked up a sombre little pathway, bordered by box hedges and lofty trees on either side. Presently the entrance porch came into view. The perfect quietness that seemed to brood all around was suddenly disturbed by the barking of a dog. Now the entire house-front greeted my gaze. A red brick building of austere formalism, it appealed to me as an appropriate expression of the austere genius it housed. Then I suddenly remembered that Hardy had had the house built according to his own design.

A rap of the knocker on the door brought the housemaid. Mr. Hardy was at home. I was ushered into the drawing-room. As I passed in, Mrs. Hardy, who was alone in the room, rose from a chair at one side of a tea-table. She came forward and greeted me.

After general remarks, she told me not to ask Mr. Hardy for his autograph; he was so pestered by autograph hunters. It was an unnecessary warning, as I had no idea of such an objective, and, in any case, would not have utilised this privileged visit as a means of obtaining a specimen of his handwriting, however greatly that would have been cherished.

My attention was suddenly but quietly arrested by the entry of the great man. He seemed to come tripping into the room like an elf; as if he had just forsaken converse with ethereal woodland creatures and returned to the everyday world. He gave me a warm handshake. His magnetic personality began to make itself felt moment by moment. The atmosphere was as if charged with the aura of personality.

Perhaps the first aspect of Hardy's appearance to strike the observer was his very domed head; in the majority of cases a sure sign of great imagination. Sparse hair, accentuating the bald cranium, grew to comparative thickness behind the ears. From back to front it was a decidedly long-shaped head; and I could not rid me of the impression how much it resembled Wagner's, as

depicted in profile photographs of the great musician. It sat upon a thinnish neck which connected with sloping shoulders and a small body. The chief feature of his wonderful face was the remarkably aquiline shape of nose, drawn up tight at the top of the bridge and broadening towards the nostrils. But the object of surpassing interest was the face itself. Sad, intensely sad, and deeply wrinkled, it possessed a certain likeness to a large withered walnut. There came to my mind his lines :

‘ I look into my glass
And view my wasting skin.’

The face seemed to betoken a weathering of infinite experiences, of communion with ghostly images of thought and imagination ; as if it had looked out rather upon setting suns than towards the horizons of morning, and found in sombre night a temperamental affinity denied it by garish day.

‘ I have lived with Shades so long,
So long have talked to them,’

as he sung in one of those masterly reflective poems. It was a visage replete with subtle suggestions. An ineffable dreaminess stole into the expression of the little beady eyes occasionally, as if they were accustomed to endless reverie. Then they would suddenly light up and sparkle, and the haunting stanza of that unique lyric of his kept invading my memory :

‘ When I came back from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes,
All marked with mute surmise
My radiance rare and fathomless,
When I came back from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes ! ’

‘ Rare and fathomless ’—no words could more exactly describe the effect of his expressive eyes. A small mouth was barely perceptible beneath a straggling moustache. The whole countenance was rounded off by a beautifully indented chin, perfect in formation. Hardy’s head was, indeed, a worthy subject for the artist. Innumerable variations of line and curve, well-defined projection and depression of this or that lineament, the play of light and shadow in delicate nuances, and the pure classic outline of the whole, presented infinite possibilities for artistic treatment. Of his numerous

portraits in paint, line, and sculpture, the most successful presentation has been achieved by his old friend, William Strang, in the etching which adorns, as frontispiece, the first volume of the Mellstock edition of the Wessex novels.

He was dressed in a very dark blue suit and a black and white waistcoat, showing above it a thin rim of white linen collar. His small feet were encased in black shoes. He sat with one leg thrown over the other. An acute sensitiveness was at once apparent. His small, rather stumpy, hands would twitch from time to time in nervous movement. Characteristic little mannerisms were exhibited in the play of his left hand, the thumb and forefinger of which he would stretch across the ridge of the left crossed leg, or he would deposit the thumb only inside the left trouser pocket. An impression of one or another of these mannerisms has been seized in certain photographic reproductions.

His approachable manner was the essence of grace and modesty. There was no patronising gesture, no pose whatsoever; though one could readily visualise a conscious and confident knowledge of power behind the modesty. He possessed a soft-cadenced voice with just a faint suggestion of rough rustic flavour in it—an English voice, but not of the mincing, or high-pitched, order. His speech came clear and liquid, and his conversation was free and easy. When humour became uppermost (and I discovered that Hardy the man appeared a much happier entity than Hardy the creator as revealed in his works), he gave way to subdued laughter accompanied by a merry twinkle in the eyes.

Though I had determined not to speak too much about his own work, thinking he might be sensitive on the point, and was prepared to steer an adroit course if, by chance, I should make allusion to it, of his own accord, and greatly to my delight, he brought the theme into conversation.

At that time, and indeed from the last years of the nineteenth century onwards, Hardy's interest had almost entirely deserted fiction and centred on poetry. He told me he had never anticipated his novels would become so popular as they eventually turned out to be. To learn style, he thought the reading and writing of poetry were more serviceable than the reading and writing of prose. Poetry was a more concentrated form of art. You could gain more from reading one or two lines of poetry than from several pages of fiction. Before the Great War, when certain persons imagined the public had stopped taking any interest in poetry,

that poetry, indeed, was a dead thing, the creator of 'The Dynasts' had declared it was not dead, but would flourish.

As the conversation turned to the topic of 'Tess,' he showed interest when I informed him I had relations whose name was Turberville. The Dorset Turbervilles, he told me, had ceased to live in their native county. Then he referred to the legend of the coach introduced into Chapter LI of 'Tess.' The story had been told to him by an old woman. The Turberville, or D'Urberville, manor house at Wool ('Wellbridge' in the novel), to which the blood-stained coach, it is said, draws up every Christmas eve, had been since its partial demolition a farmhouse, uninhabited save by a caretaker. The place had been allowed, much to Hardy's regret, to get into a shameful condition of neglect and disorder. When I had visited it three days before, I discovered a number of fowls strutting in and around the rooms.

When Hardy was a young man Morley advised him on no account to go in for journalism—it was apt to land a writer in a rut. 'But,' he said, turning to me with a twinkle in his eyes, 'Morley himself stuck to journalism for a long time, and was very far into it indeed.' He viewed with disfavour the conscience of a publisher's reader, as that personage had constantly to be on the look-out for what would be a commercial success, and often had to turn down really good literary matter. He cited the case of James Payn, reader for Smith, Elder, who turned down Shorthouse's 'John Inglesant.' Then Macmillan, who had first refused it, took it up after Mr. Gladstone's eulogistic review, and the novel became a gigantic success. But Hardy could not understand this, as he had always considered 'John Inglesant' very dull—'like,' he added, with a merrier twinkle, 'so many "goody" books.'

I think it was at this stage, when he applied the word 'goody' to Shorthouse's book, that the theme of pessimism became prominent. He was very illuminating on the subject. The attacks levelled at his so-called pessimistic views had been like barbed arrows to his sensitive temperament. Latterly these instruments of attack had been directed more particularly at his poetry; and from certain quarters they came thick and fast when his *Collected Poems* appeared in 1919. His old friend, Frederic Harrison, the Positivist, had just recently passed severe judgment on what he considered their unrelieved pessimism in an essay in his 'Novissima Verba' (1920.)

After a brief pause, Hardy threw back his head. 'All this

talk about my pessimism !' he exclaimed, in a rather disgusted tone. 'What does it matter what an author's view of life is ? If he finally succeeds in conveying a completely satisfying artistic expression, that is what counts.' He asked me if I had read the poems—adding, 'they got collected somehow.' Harrison had complained of their uniform sadness. 'Now,' Hardy continued, 'there are all kinds in that volume—some as bright as you could wish, others sad, and yet others neutral.' What more could anyone want ? 'Besides,' he went on, 'if I have my own view of life, then I must be truthful, and not simply follow the conventional, sentimental illusions.' He considered Harrison's view extraordinary for a man of his experience.

Again, the Provost (I think it was) of Eton College had also criticised him severely for the gloom of his poems. Hardy asked him if he had read Gray's 'Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.' If so, did he not think there was gloom and to spare in that poem ? His critic replied that indeed there was, and that was why he disliked the poem ! Perhaps there is no better summary of Hardy's philosophy of life than his own description of the character, Robert Trewe, the poet, in the Wessex tale, 'An Imaginative Woman' . . . 'he was a pessimist in so far as that character applies to a man who looks at the worst contingencies as well as the best in the human condition.'

By now we had finished tea, and Mrs. Hardy rose and went to open a French window that gave on to a spacious garden. She led in a noble dog. And I observed that a share of the repast had been prepared for this dumb friend. Later I learned that the dog's name was 'Wessex.'

With reference to revision of literary work after it has been published, Hardy held decided views against a man of letters tampering too much with his creations. He was of the opinion that they lost their freshness and spontaneity in the process. He instanced the fastidious retouching in which Meredith and Henry James habitually indulged. He became particularly entertaining when speaking of James's fondness for emendation. Hardy had asked him if he ever saw his work finished, completed. No, James had replied, it was never finished because he was never satisfied with it, and he believed in constant revision. Hardy looked upon that as a sort of 'eternal proof reading.' When it had been necessary for the Wessex novelist to go over his works for new editions, he had only corrected obvious errors, and had retouched very little indeed.

The new methods of novel writing and the so-called realism of the younger generation made very little appeal to Hardy. In discussing realism, he recounted that a friend had told him how much he had enjoyed Richard Jefferies's 'Amaryllis at the Fair,' because everything happened in that novel just as it happens at a farm. Hardy, be it remembered, was born and bred among rustics. He had not only understood the English peasant through and through, but had given to the world's imaginative literature the most artistic and living representations of rustic character ever created. When, therefore, he pronounced the opinion that he had never heard farm folk talk in the manner they were made to do in Jefferies's book, he spoke with the voice of authority.

His chief points of criticism against the younger novelists of the period were with reference to their want of plot and lack of romance. Romance must always be an essential element, no matter how many other qualities it contain, in a novel addressed to a wide novel-reading public. He felt out of sympathy with these methods of the younger men, methods which, he thought, they owed largely to Mr. Arnold Bennett. The kind of fiction being read at that time by the public was, to him, appalling.

From fiction our talk drifted to criticism. He did not think we had a great critic in this country, and certainly there were none in America. There was lacking a great critic who, instead of following the lead, would think for himself. Saintsbury had read too much, and he did not possess sufficient insight. Indeed a man in order to be a great critic must be *born* with quick critical insight for what is of permanent literary value. According to Hardy, such a man had not at that stage entered the arena of modern literary criticism.

During the course of talk it was delightful to hear the references to the various literary celebrities he had known as fast friends—George Meredith, Henry James, William Black, James Payn, Viscount Morley, Frederic Harrison, Sir J. M. Barrie, Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, and a host of others.

A gleam of real pleasure and genuine pride came into his face when we began to talk about his beloved countryside, which I had been haunting with steadily increasing affection for the past few days. Naturally every nook and corner of 'Dorset Dear' were as familiar to Hardy as if they had been his own private possessions. Did not these villages and hamlets, these heaths and meadows and vales, owe an unaccountable debt to the interpreter, who had not only made known their characteristics and

peculiarities, but had invested these landmarks with significant romance for the lasting delight of the entire reading world? Like Meredith, Hardy was a lover of the open road. In former days he used to think nothing of walking from Dorchester to Bridport and back, a distance of about thirty miles. When younger he was a keen cyclist, and enjoyed that method of getting about the country.¹

I gave him an account of my jaunts to Maiden Castle, Bockhampton, Bindon Abbey, Wareham, Bere Regis, Corfe Castle, and Poxwell. It would not have surprised me had he paid little attention to these trifling explorations, however great an effect their revelation had exercised upon me; but, to be frank, it was apparent he must have been sufficiently interested, for, after my recital, the subject, instead of being dropped, was allowed to open out to alluring vistas of suggested regions yet to be discovered during the remainder of my sojourn.

While I was taking my leave of Mrs. Hardy, the great man went out to the hall and tapped the barometer. He returned to tell me the weather would keep fair. On the doorstep he inquired where I would be going the following day, and strongly urged me, if I had not made plans, to go either to Weymouth or to Sherborne, the latter containing the most impressive ecclesiastical fane in Dorset—Sherborne Abbey. He then walked with me down part of the sombre pathway towards the gate, telling me of places I should not fail to include in my itinerary, and showing all the time the liveliest and kindest interest. He walked along the trim-bordered path with his domed head exposed to the late afternoon air—the great little Wizard of the South. I took a last look at his countenance. He seemed so alert and vital that little did I imagine that this man of over eighty was going to live only another seven years, and that his venerable appearance, which the searching light of out-of-doors made more plainly visible, would be withdrawn from this countryside he loved so well. And that sad, wistful, withered face, replete with subtle suggestions, full of infinite pity—how often and how clearly it has visited my imagination to this day!

But, in spite of all the external strata of age, Hardy's eighty years sat lightly upon him. That afternoon he was in the best of health, cheerful and brisk. An unquenchable spirit of youth

¹ The present writer possesses a post card, written in the famous novelist's neat handwriting, sent by Hardy to the late Sir Sidney Colvin in July 1913, inviting him to lunch at 'Max Gate.' He writes: 'I am sorry that Lady Colvin suffers from road sickness. I did for years, but bicycling cured it.'

showed unmistakably in his eager and vigorous interest regarding the events of the day. His intellect was as keen as ever in tackling modern problems and in viewing the condition of things from a universal and all-embracing standpoint. If his great age denied him the activities in which he formerly indulged, market day in Dorchester often found him among the farmers, talking with all sorts of country folk, by whom he was respected and beloved, and who regarded him as a figure of which they might well be proud.

His firm hand-clasp and cheering words of farewell terminated the inspiring visit to 'Max Gate.' I found myself outside the large white swing-to gate of the sanctuary; and the little elfin figure had retreated beyond the turning of the sombre pathway. As I sauntered along the Wareham road towards Dorchester in the late afternoon light, I began to realise I had attained some of the greatest moments of my life; moments I should never forget as long as I lived; moments it had been worth while being born into the world to experience.

Ever since that memorable red-letter day these moments have been treasured as a living and loving memory; the remembrance of having met and conversed with the greatest literary giant of the modern world.

FRANCE AND THE WOMEN'S VOTE.

'I FOR my part should like to have a vote,' a Frenchwoman exclaimed, in her pretty Loire dialect, a few days before the last General Election for the *Chambre des Députés*. 'Yes, I certainly should,' she added emphatically.

'I am glad to hear it,' the English friend, to whom she was speaking, replied with a sigh of relief. 'For ever since I landed in France, a good two months ago now, I have been wandering about in search of women who wish to have votes. I have been through two towns from end to end, through a huge country district too, and you are the third would-be voter I have found. You are the only woman indeed, I believe, for miles around here, who really wishes for a vote. And you I can hardly count, for you are more often in Paris than here. Besides, you are, as you say, "*dans les affaires et . . .*"'

"*Dans les affaires*" a vote might be useful, you think?' Madame remarked with a laugh. 'And you are right. If we women all had votes *Députés* would be more eager than they are to redress our grievances; and what you call the struggle for life would be less of a struggle than it is. For then a clean sweep would soon be made of the *Code Napoléon*, so far as it touches women. It ought to have been made a hundred years ago at least. You cannot imagine the humiliations it entails on us, the expense to which it puts us. And all because of the sins of *Napoléon's* sisters! Had they been decent women, he would have framed his *Code* quite differently. As it is, we are penalised, even now, for what they did generations ago! What could be more absurd, more flagrantly unjust? And as it is so it will be, until women have votes.'

'A strong reason, one might think, why all Frenchwomen should wish to have votes,' the Englishwoman retorted sharply. 'Yet they don't. All around here, indeed, they don't care a whit for votes. The average woman would rather be without a vote than with one.'

'The average Frenchwoman, whether here or elsewhere, never did care a whit for a vote,' said Madam.

'The average woman, perhaps. None the less, when I was

in France, two years ago, I came across quite a fair number of women who were clamouring for votes. What is become of them all ?'

'Oh, we never had clamourers here !' Madame exclaimed. 'Two years ago you spent your time in large cities, Paris for one, and now you are in a provincial town, you must not forget, in Central France, too, the real old, well-to-do France, where we are too busy watching over our crops and storing away our money-bags to clamour for anything, or against anything, either, unless it be taxes. If it is clamourers you are seeking, you must go back to Paris, Marseilles, Lyon, Clermont-Ferrand, and such places. There you will, no doubt, still find women who clamour for votes, although, of course, not so many now as you found in '26.'

'But why not so many ?'

'Because, for one thing, we as a nation are much better off now than we were in '26. Then you had sometimes 200 francs, nay, more, for every pound note you exchanged, and now you have only 124. A franc is, in fact, worth almost twice as much now as it was when you were in Paris two years ago.'

'But what on earth has that to do with women's wish for votes ?' the Englishwoman inquired, in surprise.

'Why, more than anything else, or anyone, excepting perhaps the priest,' Madame replied, with quite a professional air. 'For the value of a vote, in many women's eyes, varies inversely with the value of the franc : the higher that value—the more they can buy with their francs, that is to say—the less they care for votes.'

According to her, the average Frenchwoman is not interested in politics : she knows nothing at all about them and cares as little as she knows. In finance, on the contrary, in everything indeed that touches the making or spending of money, she is very keenly interested ; and, by an odd sort of instinct, as it seems, she understands its whys and wherefores. A skilful politician, a statesman in the full meaning of the term, nothing would ever make her ; but a shrewd, clear-headed business woman she is born—she needs no making. Of that there is proof in the excellent work she does when member of a Chamber of Commerce, the only real council of which she is allowed to be a member. And she is fully alive to the fact that she has a special talent for dealing with money, for obtaining a good return for what she spends. In that she is quite the equal of man, she holds, nay, perhaps superior to him. In what concerns politics, however, it is otherwise, she admits : in that the average man is

superior to her, more capable of dealing with them skilfully. She is quite content, therefore, for she is very intelligent, logical too, to leave the management of public affairs in men's hands; and, so long as all goes well, it never even occurs to her to question their right to manage them in their own way. It is only when things go wrong, when the franc goes down with a rush, in fact, as it did in '26, and the price of bread goes up, entailing, as it must, privation on her and hers, that she begins to have doubts on the subject. Then she, the average Frenchwoman, i.e. the overwhelming majority of Frenchwomen, waxes resentful; for she knows, feels it in her very bones, that something is wrong somewhere; while the women whose brains are sharper than those of the average wax not only resentful, but anxious and suspicious. For they look on the fall of the franc as proof of mismanagement, *gaspillage, dégât*, the wasting of money, proof, in fact, that the Ministers are not carrying on the business of the State as it ought to be carried on, prudently, thriftily, and that the *Députés* are not doing what they were sent to Paris to do—not keeping the Ministers on the narrow path by holding the nation's purse-strings tight. Before long such women—not the average woman, she rests content with cavilling—begin to wonder whether things might not be better managed if they themselves had a voice in the choosing of the *Députés*, and through them, of the Ministers? And from that to wishing for votes is not many steps.

'In '26 there was, no doubt, a large number of women—not here, but elsewhere in France—who were, as you say, clamouring for votes,' Madame continued when she had finished with her 'brief,' as she called it. 'And had the franc continued to fall, and the price of bread to rise, there would soon have been many more. Even the average woman, indeed, might, before very long, have joined in the clamour, especially if the clergy had brought their influence to bear on her, and they would. Then the very sleepest of our Senators would have wakened up to the fact that our Suffrage Bill must be passed, and would have passed it. So at least I firmly believe. Don't forget that, when all the world was wringing its hands because Grévy would not resign, he did resign, and gladly, when les Dames des Halles appeared before his windows, with their arms a-kimbo and their fierce "Démission" cries.'

'Instead of continuing to fall, however, the franc, as you know, began to go up, the price of bread to go down, and things to brighten up all round. The result was that the average woman, whose comfort in life depends, in a great measure, on bread being cheap,

soon ceased to trouble her head with public affairs, and was once more quite content to leave the management of them in men's hands. Even in our great cities, except Paris and perhaps two or three more, it is only a comparatively small minority of women who are now really eager to have votes, so eager that they not only clamour for them, but work hard to obtain them. Still, what happened in '26 may, and probably will, happen again ; for here in France minorities have a quite marvellous talent for transforming themselves suddenly into majorities. Heaven alone knows what might not happen any day were there a great financial crisis here, or even a rumour of war.'

The Englishwoman thought, as she listened, of a little scene she once witnessed, on a War anniversary, in a large French church. An eloquent and somewhat emotional young Abbé was preaching ; and, in the course of his sermon, he paused for a moment. Then, overcome by his feelings, as it seemed, he suddenly threw up his arms and cried, with the ring of passion in his voice : '*Dieu, donnez-nous la paix. Donnez-nous la paix.*'

The church was packed with women—women of the poorer class for the most part—and when they heard that cry it was as if some Banquo, long dead and safely buried, had suddenly appeared among them and brought them face to face with what thrilled them with horror and dread. '*Dieu, donnez-nous la paix,*' was caught up on every side with a fervour that told a ghastly tale.

'Yes, many among us still feel that another war would be more than we could bear,' Madame said gravely, when told of that scene. 'Still, were it to come, bear it we should, bravely too, I hope and believe.'

Now, that Frenchwoman prides herself on knowing her fellow-countrywomen well ; and such of them as are working-class women she does, undoubtedly, know very well indeed. For in France, as in all other countries, the average woman is a working-class woman, and it is in her that she is specially interested. For it is, she maintains, on the average woman, the woman whose name spells multitude, that everything depends, so far as women's suffrage is concerned. That brains count, as well as heads, she admits of course ; none the less she is firmly convinced that even the 'brainiest' of women can do but little so long as the average woman is against her. It is with the average woman that all power rests : when the day comes that she wishes for a vote, has set her heart on having a vote, a vote she will have before long.

Of that Madame has never a doubt, just as she has never a doubt

but that it is the value of the franc, *i.e.* the price of bread, that will decide whether that day will come soon or late. Firmly convinced as she is, however, that among working-class women the value of the franc is the most important factor in what determines whether they do or do not wish for votes, she is quite alive to the fact that, even among them, it is not the only factor ; while among Frenchwomen as a whole, women of all classes clubbed together, it is not even the most important. Among them the influence of the Church works more powerfully, although more subtly, than the value of the franc. And it works for, not against, women having votes. Were it otherwise, the number of women who wish for votes would be very much smaller than it is, Madame maintains ; although even as it is, it is much larger than it seems to be. For, according to her, thousands of women in France are now standing aloof from the Suffrage Movement, although they wish to have votes, and would fight for them gladly were it not for their fear of something or other—some 'ism more often than not.

In the middle classes, especially the lower middle class, the overwhelming majority of women have a great horror of Communism, of everything that smacks of Bolshevism, too ; while in the higher, the majority of women combine with their horror of Communism and Bolshevism a profound mistrust of the masses, of the whole proletarianne tribe, in fact. They are haunted by fear of the use the average working-class woman would make of her vote if she had one ; and they bitterly resent the fact that, if they themselves are ever to have votes, she too must have one. Many of them regard with more or less suspicion, as a danger ahead, reaction or progress, as the case may be, militarism, pacificism, republicanism or royalism ; nay, even Calvinism, modernism, or Clericalism noir. They, therefore, at once become anxious, thanks to their fear of the proletarianne, at any mention of votes for women. Then, in all classes alike, from the highest to the lowest, the average woman's dread of war is to be reckoned with ; and that dread is the veriest *x*. Whether in the long run it will make for peace or for war, or even for or against votes for women, it passes the wit of man, as of woman, to decide. So at least Madame insisted strongly, when saying good-bye to her English friend who, having failed to find in country districts more would-be voters than she could count on her fingers, was bent on trying her luck in towns. And, oddly enough, a piece of real luck befell her, in the very first railway carriage she entered.

Two women were sitting there, mother and daughter, as it was

easy to see, and of the well-to-do farmer class. The mother was the very picture of comeliness, shrewdness, and good humour ; while as for the daughter she was extremely pretty, and, although married, was quite young.

They greeted her with evident pleasure. It was a real delight to them, they declared, to meet a foreigner, ' especially an Englishwoman,' the daughter added emphatically. For they lived, as they said, far away from a town, in a district which foreigners rarely visited, and in two lonely farmhouses, miles away from each other.

The daughter did not know a word of English, and until that day had never spoken to an Englishwoman. None the less, for Englishwomen of all sorts alike she seemed to have a quite special cult. She went out of her way, again and again, to express her admiration of them, and with a fervour that was somewhat embarrassing. And, oddly enough, her admiration was founded solely on the fact that they had votes and could sit in Parliament !

' Oh, if only I were an Englishwoman and had a vote,' she cried again and again, almost passionately. To have a vote was evidently her one great wish in life. Her whole heart was set on having a vote, and she bitterly resented being without one. That she should be without was, she argued, quite gravely, logically too, a scandalous piece of injustice.

The Englishwoman looked at her in amazement ; for never had it even occurred to her that she would find, in France, a farmer's wife who not only wished to have a vote but who was herself of the very stuff of which fighters for votes are made. She was more amazed still, when the mother informed her that how such wild, fantastic notions had ever got into her daughter's head, she could not imagine. It was not her mother who had put them there ; that she could swear. Nor was it her father, nor her husband, nor anyone whom they knew. Her own belief was, she said, that no one had put them there, that they had just come of themselves—' just growed,' she would no doubt have said had she ever heard of Topsy. And in that thought she seemed to find comfort ; for, after pondering for a moment, she added quite cheerily : ' Après tout, qu'est-ce que ça fait ! Ce n'est que les idées, et les idées se passent vite. Et son mari l'adore ! '

As the Seeker went on with her search, she soon had proof that her friend on the Loire was right : even in large towns she did not find so many women who wished for votes as she had found in '26. On the other hand, she found many more than she had ever found

before who would have wished for votes, could they have had them without certain other women having them also.

A bright-eyed old lady, who kept a little shop, unfolded to her a tale of woe one day. Make a living she could not, she declared in her quaint semi-patois. The rent she had to pay was *énorme*, and so were the rates and taxes; while as for the octroi! When she had paid all she must pay she had not a sou left for herself! If Messieurs les Députés had to earn the money their *fonctionnaires* spent, they would soon put an end to their spending. Of that she was sure. Evidently her opinion of Députés and *fonctionnaires* alike was not high.

Her English customer was a little puzzled as to how anyone left without a sou could look so prosperous. Still, she was sorry for her distress, and strove to comfort her by telling her that better days were at hand.

'When you women have votes, things will be quite different,' she assured her. 'It is only the men who know how to make good use of money you will elect as Députés. There will be no waste then. You will see to that.'

For a moment the old woman's face beamed with pride and delight; then an oddly shrewd look came into her eyes and there was a suspicious ring in her voice as she asked: 'And what about the women who are Communists, Bolsheviki? Would they have votes if I had one?'

The Englishwoman was forced to confess that they would; whereupon the old lady at once waxed righteously indignant and swore that if Communist women were to have votes, she, for her part, would rather be without one!

'Think of the mad extravagance that would go on, the waste, the picking, stealing, open plundering, if they had the choosing of Députés,' she cried wrathfully. 'They with their heads full of wild notions; with their eternal clamouring for all shares alike, and such follies. Why, they would take the very bed from under me, the arm-chair my own mother left to me, nay, even my kettles and pans. Bad as things are now, they would be a thousand times worse then. May the saints preserve us from votes for women, if Communist women are to have them.'

The Englishwoman fled, vowing, as she went, never again to suggest women's suffrage as a panacea for women's wrongs.

It was not until she began to go about in busy manufacturing towns that she found signs of real interest in the suffrage question.

In one of these towns, however, most of the women she came across seemed to regard votes as a matter of more or less importance to them personally. That was especially the case with middle-class women, much more with them than with working-class women, in spite of the fact that working-class husbands were, for the most part, eager that their wives should have votes; whereas with the average middle-class husband it was quite otherwise—a sore grievance sometimes to his wife. For she, more often than not, was eager to have a vote—bent, too, on having one.

‘It is an insult to me,’ one woman would argue, ‘that my own employés, mere lads, who can hardly read and write, should have votes, while I, their mistress, am voteless.’

‘What could be more absurd,’ another would ask, ‘than to allow a lazy, worthless husband to have a voice in the making of laws, while one is denied to his wife, who is perhaps supporting him?’

In France middle-class women are very different now from what they were in pre-war days. Thousands who were then living at ease are now working hard, earning their daily bread: thousands who then had husbands or fathers to fend for them, are now alone-standing and must fend for themselves. And, excepting for the wealthy, the fending is now much harder than it was before the War; for the cost of living has gone up by leaps and bounds, while incomes have fallen quite appallingly. A *rente* is now worth only about one-fifth of what it was before the War; and in France middle-class widows and spinsters are, for the most part, *rentières*. And although a *rentière* who then had £500 a year can still live, though sparsely, on the £100 she has now, the *rentière* who then had only £100 cannot, let her pinch and save as she will, live on the £20 she has—she must either earn money or starve. And to earn money is terribly hard for a woman who is past her prime, as most *petites rentières* are. It is hard, even if she is alone-standing; still harder if she is a widow with children; and hardest of all if a wife whose husband cannot work and has nothing but his pension. For pensions are very small, even for disabled officers, and smaller still for worn-out officials and *fonctionnaires*.

Again and again the Seeker, when in a town, came across a middle-class woman who was the mainstay of her family, the bread-winner. Her husband was dependent on her for any material comfort he had. None the less she was completely under his control, practically at his mercy; and, not only she, but, if her marriage was, as most French marriages are, a *communauté-de-bien* marriage, all

that she possessed. She could not open an account at a bank or deposit a box there without his consent ; and he had the right to examine her banking book when he chose ; the right, too, to open, without her knowledge, any box she had at the bank and take out of it whatever he found there. Nor was that the worst. He had the sole control of her children : he alone decided where, how, and by whom they were brought up and educated ; even though it was she who provided the money for their bringing up and education. No wife can obtain a passport to leave France, even though her child be dying elsewhere, without her husband's consent ; while a widow must prove that her husband is dead before she can obtain a passport ; and a spinster, that she has never had a husband. So the Code Napoléon decrees. Evidently some of the clauses of the Code were framed for the express purpose of ' keeping women in their places.' It almost seems, indeed, as if its framer had had a personal grudge against the sex, and was bent on rendering life hard for them. And quite intolerably hard it would be for some wives, were it not that most French husbands are wise, as well as kindly ; and most French wives are adepts in the art of evading laws that clash with their wishes.

There is nothing new in the present state of things with regard to women in France : as it is now so it has been for generations ; and, until the War came, it never even occurred to most women to raise a protest. Now, however, it is otherwise so far as middle-class women are concerned. To many of them the Code Napoléon is now become the veriest anathema, especially to such as are earning their daily bread, the daily bread, too, perhaps of their husbands ; for the Code entails on them real hardship as well as humiliation. They are, therefore, up in arms against it, and quite prepared to face even the risks women's suffrage may entail to secure the changes in the law on which their hearts are set. In one town the Englishwoman visited, a good half of the women who wished for votes, wished for them solely because they were convinced that, until they had them, those changes would never be made. There, as in other towns, the Code Napoléon is actually doing good service for the suffragist cause. It is the best recruiting agent the cause has, barring the Church.

Among Frenchwomen the Church is to-day the most successful of all propagandists : her influence is infinitely greater now than it was before the War, thanks to that curiously subtle religious revival that took place in France during the War. Even in the towns which the Reds regard as their own special preserves, the churches

are always crowded on Sundays and high holidays. Hosts who, before the War, never entered a church, flock there gladly now; hosts who then scoffed and jeered at curés, betake themselves now to the Presbytery instinctively when trouble comes. For in those terrible days when their husbands and sons were at the Front, face to face with death, women learnt to look on their priest as a friend, and to turn to him when in need of comfort or guidance. They turn to him still, very many of them; and, if they had votes, they would appeal to him for advice as to the candidate to whom they should give them. Of that the Englishwoman was sure; for wherever she went, whether she found many or few would-be voters depended, in a great measure, on whether the priests there were, or were not, anxious that women should have votes. Not but that in most towns there were women who were themselves anxious to have votes; some because either they or their husbands were hankering after Soviet rule; many more because of the Code Napoléon; and most of all because they thought that if they had votes, they would be able to give a helping hand to the clergy, able to secure the reopening of their schools, especially the convent schools. To many mothers, even to some who are frankly pagan, the closing of the convent schools is still a sore grievance. 'So long as the nuns had the teaching of them, girls were no trouble at all,' mothers declare; 'but now they are quite out of hand and make life a burden.'

The last place to which the Seeker went was a cathedral city, where she found that women's suffrage was a subject on which feeling was running not high, but higher than elsewhere. Men and women alike, even politicians, discussed its pros and cons with lively interest. Little wonder either; for, thanks to the Suffrage Movement, the state of things in that city was very interesting; curious, too; and, for the Englishwoman, extremely puzzling. For the very sort of men who, one might have taken it for granted, would be in favour of giving votes to women, were dead against it, and *vice versa*. Progressists and Reactionaries seemed, in fact, to change places; creeds, too, whenever women's suffrage was mentioned. Not only the clericals, but the Reactionaries of all degrees, the die-hard Conservatives and Royalists, were to a man eager that women should have votes, and were working more or less openly to secure votes for them. And, in close sympathy with them, so far as the suffrage was concerned—their allies in fact, although not in name—were all the Communists in the city, the Bolsheviks, and Red Socialists.

Meanwhile the Progressists with all their kith and kin were at heart strongly opposed to women having votes ; and, while protesting publicly that women ought to have votes, and even supporting Suffrage Bills sometimes, they were working secretly to prevent votes being given to them. So, at least, many ardent suffragettes declared ; and they had quaint stories to tell of the cunning devices by which their Progressist opponents had so far succeeded in keeping them voteless.

Now that Reactionaries should be fighting for women's suffrage and Progressists against it seemed to the Englishwoman extraordinary ; although not quite so extraordinary as that Reactionaries and Revolutionaries should be fighting in the same cause, on the same side, and practically as allies. That pointed, she thought, to a state of things that smacked of Gilbert and Sullivan. Understand it she could not, let her cudgel her brain as she would. Fortunately she came across a kindly old gentleman, who at once set to work to make things clear to her.

He was well fitted for his task, for he knew the world well, knew it as an outsider, one who cared nothing at all either for politics or creeds. Whether the Reds, Whites, or Blues were in power was, for him, a matter of indifference ; and so was whether Jesuit Colleges were open or shut. All that he cared about was that France should be well governed, so that her people might live in peace and comfort.

'So you don't understand our party divisions,' he began ; 'and I am not surprised ; for it does, as you say, seem strange, quite illogical, that priests and Bolsheviks, Reactionaries, Conservatives, and Revolutionaries should be striving to secure votes for women, while Progressists, Liberals or Radicals, and even mild Socialists should be doing their best to prevent women from having votes. Still it is not quite so strange as it seems ; for much as the various parties in favour of women's suffrage differ from one another, they are all extremists ; while, compared with them, the Progressist parties are moderates. And both moderates and extremists are keenly alive to the fact that, for every woman in France who is, at heart, a moderate, ten at least are extremists. Thus votes for women here spells votes for the extremists, a sound reason, surely, why the extremists should wish women to have votes ; and an equally sound reason why the moderates should wish them to be left voteless. For there are nearly 2,000,000 more women than men in France, you must not forget. That fact in itself goes far towards explaining why even staunch Democrats, who hold in theory that

women ought to have votes, still think many times, if they are fervent patriots, before helping to give votes to women.'

'There would be great rejoicing, even in the little Royalist camp, if the Women's Suffrage Bill was passed,' he declared; 'for most women dearly love Royalties and royal processions; there would be great rejoicing also in the Bolshevik camp, for there are not a few women who, before the War, were peace-loving but now are the veriest Ishmaelites; and great rejoicing wherever the poor do congregate, the poor who have neither goods nor chattels and, therefore, nothing to lose. Still, nowhere would there be quite such whole-hearted rejoicing as in high clerical quarters; and nowhere with such good reason. For votes for women would mean a strong Clerical party, perhaps even a semi-Clerical Government. Of that I am firmly convinced.

'And would that be for the weal of France or the woe?' the Englishwoman inquired.

'Je me le demande,' he replied, after a moment's meditation. Beyond that not one word would he say.

EDITH SELLERS.

THE STONE OF HAPPY FORTUNE.

BY A. A. IRVINE.

‘KEEPER of Hell’s Gate! How can I pay thy demand, seeing that on my way hither thieves have filched the very blood from my veins?’

As he stood in the starlight upon the dusty high road, Ghulam Mustafa’s portly figure seemed to swell yet greater with indignation.

Unmoved by pity, the guardian of the caravanserai eyed him sourly.

‘Either thou payest, or thou mayest go sleep in the sewer, which would, likewise, furnish thee with a fitting grave!’ he retorted truculently.

‘Son of a noseless mother——!’ Ghulam Mustafa began again; but he was weary. Forthwith he commenced a grumbling search in the innermost recesses of his garments for the few small coins necessary to insure him a night’s lodging.

Through the archway of sun-dried bricks he could see the line of low stone steps, along the far side of the inner courtyard, leading to the cloisters partitioned off into alcoves filled at this hour with a shouting, bustling crowd of men, women, and children. To his nostrils there floated the pungent aroma of green wood cooking-fires smouldering on cakes of cow-dung fuel, the odour of roasting meat and vegetables—grateful, but tantalising, to his capacious and very empty stomach! His faring paid, after another imprecation or two, he entered and stared about him.

On the square expanse of courtyard, its earthen surface rammed hard by the passage of myriads of horny feet, caravan camels rested and chewed stolidly, their bushy-bearded, hawk-nosed owners a-sprawl beside them. At one end of the serai, pack-ponies and donkeys neighed and brayed and kicked and stamped over their night’s ration of fodder. In the cobwebbed cloisters, by the light of flickering oil-lamps, traders were rearranging their bales, casting up their accounts, bargaining, and making their preparations for slumber.

For a minute or two Ghulam Mustafa surveyed the scene with shrewd, speculative eyes—then steered his bulky form through the throng to one of the unoccupied alcoves, and seated himself on the dingy strip of matting.

As he squatted there, silently observant, ruminating his quid of *pān*, his appearance was very different from that of the stout, well-to-do merchant who, a month before, clad in fine raiment and attended by his servant, Ala-ud-din, bent almost double under his master's baggage, had swaggered into the town of Razipur, twenty miles distant.

Those twenty miles had he covered on foot since dawn ; painfully, for he loathed walking ! There were rents in his long brown coat of soft *pashmina* cloth, gaps and tears in the baggy cotton pantaloons that clung about his ankles. The flowing ends of his green turban—in the course of his vagrant existence Ghulam Mustafa had made the pilgrimage to Mecca the Holy—looked as though they had been gnawed by rats. His chin was sore where handfuls had been tugged from his grey-flecked, once glossy, beard. His head still throbbed grievously from the hearty slipper-blows with which the jeering populace of Razipur, adding the East's most deadly insult to injury, had that morning ushered him beyond the confines of their township. In vain had been his protestations of innocence, the quotations from Holy Korān which had poured from his mouth in an endless spate. Man-handled, poor as the humblest *darwesh*, save for a meagre, secret hoard of money, he had taken the road again, a travesty of his usual self—to wit, as fat and jovial a rogue as ever twisted the text of the Korān Sharif to justify his rogueries !

It was *Kismet*, he dejectedly reminded himself ; yet his latest scheme had promised so well !—had for a month succeeded ! The very ingenuity of it had flattered his vanity ! In the guise of a rich merchant trading in cotton he had rented a house in one of the main *bazārs* of the town. The house stood back to back with the vast storeroom in which Ibrahim, the wealthy cotton-dealer, kept his supplies. Aided by Ala-ud-din, it had been an easy task to burrow a tunnel beneath the party-wall, to abstract from time to time a number of unmarked bales and re-sell them a few days later in open market to their rightful owner ! And then, when all was going well, Ala-ud-din, after a wordy quarrel over the division of the spoil, had given his master away ! Disaster had followed speedily.

At the recollection of Ala-ud-din's treachery his fists clenched and a stream of picturesque curses came rumbling through his beard.

'May Allah cut short his life ! May his woman betray him to an enemy !' he wound up virulently.

Relieved by the outburst, his thoughts turned hungrily to the question of victuals. Who was to provide them ?

Almost as the question arose in his mind, the problem commenced to solve itself. Fatima, the five-year-old daughter of Ismail, the camel-driver, had acquired a fascinating pebble ! During the afternoon she had played with it, and now discharged it with all the strength of her tiny arm at a lean, wolfish dog sneaking through the gloom towards the family pots. Woman-like, she missed the mark she aimed at—but hit another !

Startled by the smart rap on his skull, Ghulam Mustafa leapt to his feet with a howl that rang out even above the din of the serai.

‘I am slain !’ he bawled, clapping a hand to his forehead, ‘*Ya Allah !* I am slain ! May the curse of Allah light upon this place where *Jinn* hurl thunderbolts in the darkness !’

Immediately, a group of onlookers began to gather before the alcove, and the camel-driver thrust his way to the front.

‘*Tobah !*’ he cried. ‘Heaven forbid ! Look you !’—his glance fell on the green turban—‘look you, Hāji, it was but the fault of a little child ! Her mother shall chastise her.’

Ghulam Mustafa went on bawling. Already he had noted the look of concern on the man’s face, his expression of ox-like stupidity.

‘Thou worthy father !’ he roared indignantly, ‘who permittest thy spawn to cast stones at one who has journeyed to Mecca Sharif ! Will thy excuses heal the lump on my head as big as the dome of a mosque ? Nay ! Nay !—to-morrow, before the Qāzi, we shall see whether there be any justice for a poor Hāji who has fasted since daybreak—— !’

The group of onlookers round the alcove melted away as quickly as it had gathered. Law-suits and alms-giving were matters for which they had no fancy ! Ismail alone remained, troubled in spirit. He foresaw his journey delayed indefinitely, a lengthy string of witnesses and officials pestering him for bribes. An ingratiating smile spread over his foolish countenance.

‘Listen, O Hāji ! Surely the affair can be otherwise settled ?’ he implored. ‘A good meal, first of all ? Perchance a trifle of money—— ?’

Whilst he continued pleading, Ghulam Mustafa picked up the missile and examined it carefully, turning it over with his fingers. It was very heavy for its size : it was oval, and in the shadow of the alcove it appeared to be black—the shape and colour of the sacred stone of the Kaaba ! He had seen one or two such stones before :

tradition had it that they dropped from the moon. His wits were working rapidly; here was opportunity for profit!

'I am inclined to pardon thee,' he announced at length, graciously. 'After all, as thou sayest, it was but the thoughtlessness of a child—moreover, of a girl-child.' His eyes twinkled humorously. 'Verily, there is no accounting for the deeds of women! Even the Prophet himself (blessed be his name!) in the chapter of the Korān Sharīf entitled "The Chapter of Daybreak," prayed for deliverance from the mischief of women blowing upon knots——'

'Allah will give to thee, O Hāji!' Ismail broke in joyfully. 'I may bring, then, something to eat?'

As he turned to go, Ghulam Mustafa held up a hand, staying him.

'There is no need!' he said in a mysterious whisper. 'For I perceive that there is great virtue in this stone—for one who knows how to employ it. It shall furnish me with a mess of pottage!'

Ismail gasped, awestruck. 'Pottage from a stone?' he marvelled.

'Even so! All that is required is a little hot water in a bowl.'

'That is easily furnished!'

Ismail brought the bowl, and Ghulam Mustafa dropped into it Fatima's plaything, taking care to let it rattle against the bottom. He stirred up the water with his forefinger, and tasted it.

'It is already an excellent pottage!' he declared. 'It may be that a little seasoning would improve the flavour,' he added meditatively.

'That shall also be given!' Ismail fetched salt and a goodly pinch of spices.

'A rare pottage!' commented Ghulam Mustafa, smacking his lips. 'Yet it still lacks something of perfection.' He sniffed at the bowl. 'A slight thickening? A small admixture of roasted meat and lentils fried in oil——?'

'O Hāji, I bring them!'

Ismail returned with a platter of greasy vegetables and *kabābs* of roasted goat's-flesh spitted on a wooden skewer. Ghulam Mustafa transferred them to the bowl, and raised it to his mouth.

Whilst he enjoyed his supper, Ismail, his ox-like face beaming with satisfaction, sat crossed-legged beside him, passing him flaps of unleavened bread and draughts of water. The meal finished, he offered his guest the post-prandial blessing:

'May Allah have mercy on thy belly!'

Ghulam Mustafa uttered a sigh of repletion, and brushed his sleeve across his lips.

'It is indeed a magic stone!' he exclaimed exultantly. His voice took a solemn key. 'Tell me, O Ismail, my friend, hast thou a son?'

The camel-driver shook his head sorrowfully.

'Not yet. There has been but one child born to us—Fatima. Still, we are young——'

Ghulam Mustafa peered into the bowl, and held it out to him.

'There remains a drop or two. Taste, then!—and pray to Allah to grant thee a man-child speedily.'

Ismail did as he was bidden. '*Māshāllāh!* It has a life-giving savour——!' he began.

'Said I not that it was full of virtue? Now mayest thou hope for the fulfilment of thy wishes. As for the contemptible amount due to me for thy tasting of it——' He paused, and Ismail's hand slipped readily to his belt.

A little later, after a pull at his friend's bubbling *hugqa* by the ashes of the fire, Ghulam Mustafa returned to the alcove for his night's rest.

'Allah is gracious and merciful!' he ejaculated piously, pillow-ing his head upon the folds of his turban. 'Assuredly He sent fools into this world for a purpose!'

He curled himself up on his strip of matting, and went soundly to sleep.

When he awoke next morning the sun was about to rise, and the serai was almost empty. Most of the wayfarers had started before dawn, meaning to be far on their road before the heat of the day.

Hastily he performed the enjoined ablutions, followed by the prayers and prostrations of the *Namāz-i-Subh*, the first of the five periods of daily worship, his face turned towards Mecca.

And whilst he was thus engaged, two men sat watching him from across the courtyard. In low tones they conversed together in *Ramāsi*, the secret jargon of the Thugs. They were followers of the Prophet, but it was many years since Muslim had joined Hindu in that dread fraternity of assassins, taking *Kāli*, the Hindu goddess, for his patroness.

'I tell you again, O Yusuf Khan, that he is not worth strangling,' argued the younger of the two, who was little more than a youth,

with a handsome, cheery countenance. 'As thou sawest last night, he had to beg his bread. He had no baggage. His clothes are torn and dusty.'

Yusuf Khan, a dour-visaged ruffian, spat scornfully. 'Thou art young at the game, O Yār Muhammad!' he sneered. 'Though his coat be torn, it is of good cloth; and it is well known that in these days many a traveller assumes the garb of poverty to journey more safely with his money-bags and jewels of price. Maybe he is such an one. Moreover, it is full two moons since I have slain a man, and my fingers itch to twist my *rumāl* round his great, fat neck!'

Yusuf Khan drew through his hands his strangling-cloth, thumbing the lump of silver knotted in one corner.

'By the sacred pickaxe and the skull-necklace of Kāli, he shall die this day!' he asserted masterfully. 'Come! Let us speak with him!'

Followed by Yār Muhammad, he lounged over to where Ghulam Mustafa was preparing to depart.

'*Salām-'alai-kum!*' he greeted him. 'We be leaving, my brother and I, for the city of Manglūr. If that be likewise thy destination, let the three of us walk together; for the country between is rough, and the people thereof thievish.'

Ghulam Mustafa returned his greeting, regarding the two men narrowly. They seemed respectable folk, but one could never be certain. In any case, it would do no harm to proclaim his poverty.

'It is well spoken!' he approved. 'Let us join together for company's sake; but as for thieves, I fear them not. Being snared in the net of misfortune, I have not even the wherewithal to buy me a mouthful of *pān*!'

Yusuf Khan screwed his harsh features into a smile.

'Allah rewards the merciful!' he said, handing over a morsel of areca-nut wrapped in a betel leaf. 'We carry with us food for the journey. Come, brethren!'

He led the way out of the serai.

For a time their course lay along the highway. The morning mists had cleared from the scattered patches of cultivation, and the warm air was acrid with the smell of the fine dust stirred by the wheels of creaking bullock-carts loaded with grain and cotton. Through the dust-haze there rode or plodded folk of all castes and classes, intent on business or on pleasure: pilgrims, traders, vagabonds, gaily dressed companies of villagers bound for a local fair,

a marriage procession chanting to strident music, vendors of holy Ganges water ambling their curious jog-trot, their baskets of sealed bottles a-swing from bamboo poles.

On either side of the way stretched a vast expanse of open sun-parched country, thinly covered with thorn-scrub, dotted at times with mud-built villages and mango-groves. In the distance, beyond where the vultures wheeled over a dying camel, black-buck were feeding, and the water-fowl broke their fast in the shallow, stagnant pools.

Ghulam Mustafa, chewing his quid of *pān*, went gaily forward with his companions. Yusuf Khan remained, for the most part, dourly silent; but Yār Muhammad listened eagerly to the tale of Mustafa's wanderings, and told him in return about Manglūr, the chief town of the petty principality for which they were bound. Nawāb Bahādūr Khan was ruler of it: himself a Hāji, a man in the prime of life, a just and generous chief, fond both of sport and of a jest. This information Ghulam Mustafa stored up for future use.

After the midday prayer they turned aside, and, fording the stony bed of a river, followed a rough track across the fields which led to a strip of jungle. It was a short cut, said Yusuf Khan, to their destination. Ghulam Mustafa looked around him, vaguely uneasy, but it was too late to draw back.

Gradually the forest became thicker, and the track was almost hidden by dense undergrowth matted by trailing creepers. There was scarcely any sound, except the chattering of monkeys in the murk of the tall tree-tops overhead.

At length they came to an open glade, into which there poured the welcome rays of the sun. Through the middle of it trickled a rivulet, and Yusuf Khan, as leader of the party, ordained a halt for rest and refreshment. Yār Muhammad produced from his bundle raisins and parched maize and sweetened cocoa-nut cakes. Then he set himself to making ready the *hugqa*, without which no meal is complete.

His hunger assuaged, Ghulam Mustafa mused on Life with philosophic serenity. There were good times and bad times, no doubt; but Allah was compassionate, and the world was a pleasant place to live in! Even the surly Yusuf Khan, squatting just behind his shoulder, appeared more amiable. And here came Yār Muhammad with the *hugqa*.

A pace or two distant from him Yār Muhammad stopped and placed the *hugqa* on the ground.

'O Yusuf Khan,' he called, 'all is prepared. *Bring the tobacco!*'

Into the mind of Ghulam Mustafa flashed recollection of the dreaded *jhirni*, the Thug signal for murder! But before he could move, the strangling cloth was flung over his head and twisted round his neck. His frenzied babble of words choked suddenly, as Yusuf Khan's knuckles dug inwards against his throat and strong wrists wrenched his head violently sideways. In spite of the grossness of his body, he was a powerful man, and he struggled valiantly, fighting for his life. But as the grip on his neck grew tighter, his breath came in laboured gasps, his legs sagged under him, a red mist gathered before his eyes. And at that moment, roused by the noise and the struggle, a hare leaped from its form under the grass, and fled across the glade.

Instantly the pressure on his throat relaxed, the cloth was whipped aside. As he crumpled to the ground, there came to his dulled ears the voice of Yār Muhammad shrieking in terror: 'The Hare!'

When he recovered his senses, Yār Muhammad was bending over him, pouring water into his mouth. He heard him speaking to Yusuf Khan, who sat on a log of wood, sulky and crestfallen.

'Did I not tell thee this morning that the day was unlucky?' he was demanding. 'There was first the omen of the owl—and now of the hare. Had this man died, it would have meant for us, inevitably, death or life-long imprisonment!'

Yusuf Khan answered him with a growl.

'When Dildar Khan, disregarding the warning of Kāli, our patroness, slew a man in spite of the hare,' continued the other, gruesomely reminiscent, 'he perished miserably, eaten of worms!'

Though his head felt as if it were bursting, and the skin of his neck was rasped and sore, Ghulam Mustafa's brain was quickly at work again. One thing he realised clearly. He was in the power of these men: there would be no sense in his venting his pent-up anger. It were better to try and turn the affair to his advantage.

'It was the stone that saved me!' he affirmed impressively, drawing it from his pouch and holding it between his finger and thumb. 'As soon as my hand touched it, there was vouchsafed the portent!'

Yār Muhammad stared at him, amazed; questioned him, ill at ease: 'The stone?'

'Of wondrous power!—for those skilled in the knowledge of

it,' Ghulam Mustafa hastened to add. 'It was given me by a holy man who had made the pilgrimage, even as I, to Mecca Sharif. Besides this stone, as I told ye both aforetime, I have nothing.'

'What else of benefit will thy stone bring thee?'

'That will be seen. All things are in the hands of Allah! But, as I think, it will guide me along the path of profit and of honour—when thou and thy like are dead!'

He saw Yār Muhammad shudder, and an idea struck him. After all, his grudge was mainly against the elder man: the younger had given him water—seemed well-intentioned. He might prove useful.

'Why not join with me,' he suggested, after a pause, 'in seeking a blessing by means of the stone? Forsake thy murderous trade, which can but lead thee to ruin!'

Yār Muhammad answered him promptly. 'Truly, I am minded to go with thee. For though I was bred to Thuggee, I have had never a liking for it. What sayest thou, Yusuf Khan?'

Yusuf Khan, scowling, spat contemptuously. 'Go whither thou wilt! I care not! Thou wert ever *nā-mard*, and Kāli needs no cowards in her service! After a hundred years at the game thou would'st still be nothing better than a *belha*—a Thug's jackal!'

The young man flushed hotly, and turned to Ghulam Mustafa.

'I come with thee, then,' he promised.

His new friend rose to his feet. 'It is well!' he assented heartily. Assured of an ally, he glared malevolently at Yusuf Khan. 'May all of thy race rot!' he flung at him. 'May dogs defile thy tomb!'

Then, in company with the grinning Yār Muhammad, he resumed his journey.

By the time they reached the city the sun had set, and the *muezzin's* high-pitched, resonant call was ringing from the minaret of the mosque.

Their prayers over, they made inquiries about their lodging. The widow of Aziz, a passer-by told them, had a room to let in the *bazār* of the goldsmiths, close to the bank of the river.

They found her, a squinting, withered beldame, scouring a great iron cauldron. She creaked erect when Ghulam Mustafa, wearing his most persuasive smile, addressed her.

True, she had a room, clean and commodious, in every way suitable for noble and wealthy travellers such as she saw before her. There were many who coveted it. It was worth much more

than she was asking ; but she was poor. Her husband was dead. Her son was dead. So was her daughter-in-law. She had now only her little grandson, dependent on her for support. She named her price.

Ghulam Mustafa burst into laughter.

‘O Mother of Prosperity !’ he cried, ‘thou hast not heard aright, or thou speakest in jest ! We desire not to rent from thee the palace of the Nawāb ! Only a humble lodging, wherein we may dwell until such time as our fortunes be mended, when there will be a present of great worth for a woman like thee, compassionate towards strangers !’

The widow of Aziz countered him shrilly.

‘Thou thinkest that I would cheat thee ? I, who would not wrong another by the weight of an ant, by the morsel of skin in the cleft of a date-stone ?’

‘Moon of the Fourteenth Night ! I am but a poor Sayyid, a descendant of the Prophet (Allah’s favour be upon him !). Listen ! It is true that formerly I possessed lands and gold and many servants. There came a flood, the cholera sickness, an earthquake——’

The widow of Aziz, weary of bargaining, cut in unemotionally : ‘The earthquake was, doubtless, caused by the weight of thine overfed body ! As for poor Sayyids, there be already so many in Manglūr city that there is little room for the flies !’

At length the bargain was concluded. Muttering bitterly, the widow returned to her scouring ; grumbling angrily, Ghulam Mustafa took possession of his new quarters.

Through the doorway he fired a parting shot at his late antagonist.

‘Mother of Calamity !’ he shouted. ‘May that cauldron be slung round thy neck on the Day of Judgment !’

For a space life passed pleasantly enough for the two adventurers. The fame of the stone spread abroad, and there came many seeking advice to the small room looking out upon the river.

In the course of his travels Ghulam Mustafa had absorbed a smattering of Yunāni medicine : bleeding and the use of herbs. He would pore for a while through horn-rimmed spectacles over an immense Arabic tome, purchased at the sale of the effects of a deceased Hakīm ; and then prescribe majestically for the ills of his clients, mental and physical. More than one person was ready to testify to the stone’s efficacy : rubbed over the eyes, it had cured

night-blindness ; rubbed on the jaw-bone, toothache. The wife of Shah Zamān, the horse-dealer, possessed by the evil spirit of 'Sheikh Saddu,' had held it for a moment in her hand, and been healed !

Contented with his lot, Ghulam Mustafa dignified himself with the title of 'Mîr,' and enlarged the gaudy *kamarband* round his waist. His contentment often manifested itself in pious exhortation to Yār Muhammad, upon whom he now looked as a son.

'Behold !' he would say, 'how great is the favour of Allah towards those living uprightly ! Did he not in his compassion send boneless quails from Yaman upon the south wind to Hazrat Mûsa and his company wandering for forty years in the wilderness ?'

And then, of a sudden, there came a dearth of clients. Yār Muhammad, gossiping in the bazārs, soon discovered the reason.

'There has entered this city of Manglūr one Abu Bekr, asserting that he is a soothsayer from far Baghdad,' he reported. 'He has a long white beard and the lean sour face of a *jinnî*. He has with him a crystal ball, with which he tells fortunes.'

Ghulam Mustafa frowned. 'Are there many who visit him ?'

'Abdur Rahman, who greatly desires a son, took yesterday an offering of a goat. Karim Ullah goes to-morrow, taking two goats.'

Ghulam Mustafa chuckled. 'It would seem that this interloper is the Father of all Goats !—his name should be not Abu Bekr, but Abu Bakr !'

For a few moments he was silent, revolving plans for the discomfiture of his rival. Then he said :

'Even of goats it is possible to have a superfluity ! Unless he keep them for profit, a man needs but one, on which to ride entering Paradise. Moreover, in the Korān Sharif there is a special Sura against the "emulous desire of multiplying riches." I will go further into this matter.'

'There is yet another cause for enmity between him and me——' Yār Muhammad began, then stopped abruptly.

Ghulam Mustafa glanced at him sharply, noted his flush of embarrassment, and smiled.

'Speak on, my son !' he counselled slyly. 'When there is enmity between the young and the old, the cause is sometimes—a maiden ?'

'Thou hast guessed my secret, O my father ! She is Sakinah, daughter of Hassan, who holds a post at the Nawāb's Court. We love each other, but by means of his crystal ball this Abu Bekr has induced her father to promise her to Nādir Shah, an old man, blind

of one eye ! Nādir Shah is wealthy, and doubtless gave this robber of Baghdad a fine reward.'

'A flock of goats, belike !' chuckled Ghulam Mustafa, slapping his thigh. 'Is she so fair, thy maiden ?'

The young man burst into rhapsody. 'Her eyes are sapphires, her teeth are pearls, her lips are rubies, her breath is the perfume of musk !'

'Wah ! Wah ! A *houri*, indeed !'

'Her laughter ripples like Salsabil, the heavenly fountain ! She is my Kiblah, towards which my thoughts turn in worship night and morning !'

'*Alhamd-o-lillahe !* God be praised ! Yet remember, my son, it has been written that "*a maiden is all honey, but a wife is a buzzing sting !*"'

Yār Muhammad laughed confidently. 'This honey were worth a thousand stings ! Help me to gain the maiden, oh my father !' he prayed, with folded hands.

Ghulam Mustafa was willing enough to aid him. An alliance with a man holding a position at the Court might benefit them both.

'Since Hassan is ruled by signs and omens, it may be possible,' he answered, 'with Abu Bekr out of the way. And there has been born in my head a plan for dealing with him !'

He whispered his plan into Yār Muhammad's delighted ear.

A few days later the narrow lane in which Abu Bekr made his abode was in an uproar.

Word had gone round the neighbouring villages that on the day of *Juma*, Friday, the lucky day of all Muslims, there would be a special presage for whosoever should bring an offering of a goat. The country-folk trooped in by dozens ; the lane was packed ; goats of all colours and sizes bleated and jostled together amid their squabbling owners and the hilarious populace of the city. Abu Bekr, his white beard waving in the wind, raved on his balcony. An enemy had done this thing !

Before midday there came men sent by the Qāzi. The roads had become impassable : the Qāzi himself had been obstructed when on his way to the seat of justice ! The orders were peremptory. Abu Bekr must leave Manglūr within the hour ; otherwise, a sufficiency of rattan-strokes upon his ice-rubbed back ! The soothsayer delayed not his departure.

Wroth and in evil plight, he had plodded a short half mile beyond the limits of the town when he saw, seated by the roadside,

a tall, stout man. He drew nearer, and the stout man rose to his feet in courteous greeting.

'Oh, Well of Knowledge!' quoth the stranger, 'I have heard much of thy wisdom, and it is in my mind to seek some day thy guidance. Meanwhile, my son here brings a trifling gift for thy gracious acceptance.'

From behind a clump of bushes there emerged the grinning Yār Muhammad, dragging what was, indeed, a goat—but an animal scarce worthy of the name! It was blind, it was lame, there clung to its scrawny body a few sparse tufts of ragged, brindled hair!

'Deign to accept this gift from a poor Hāji!' the stout man urged coaxingly. 'May Allah prosper thy fortunes, and shield thee in adversity!'

Then Abu Bekr understood, only too well!

'May Allah split thy back!' he screamed viciously, and stumbled onwards.

Quit of his rival, Ghulam Mustafa was free to turn his attention to the love-affair of his *protégé*. His opportunity came when he went as a guest to Hassan's house to watch the fleet of fairy boats afloat upon the river.

It was on the occasion of the festival in honour of Khwāja Khizr, 'The Green One,' the Water-Spirit, whom some men hold to have been Ilyās, the prophet. On that day, at eventide, it is the custom of Muslims to launch upon the slowly moving waters their frail barques fashioned of bamboo covered with gold and silver tinsel, each one illumined by its tiny earthenware lamp. For by this means will be borne away the ills which menace the community.

From where he sat conversing with his host on the water-lapped steps he could hear the gay chatter of the younger folk, the sound of drums and trumpets, as the fairy flotilla drifted down, flecking the smooth, dark surface of the stream with glimmering streaks of light.

A silvery laugh rang through the darkness.

'It is the voice of Sakinah,' her father explained. 'Ahai! It is good to be young!'

Ghulam Mustafa seized his chance.

'Thou speakest truly! Let Sakinah laugh while she may! There will be scant reason for it after she is married to Nādir Shah, that one-eyed bat!'

His host, an elderly man, with a timid, vacillating face, wriggled uncomfortably.

'In truth, I did not greatly favour the match,' he confessed. 'Still, Nādir Shah is well-to-do; and, moreover, the wise man, Abu Bekr——'

His companion laughed scornfully.

'Thy wise man has departed Baghdad-wards in a cloud of goats!' he scoffed. 'A sorry trickster, diddling with a crystal pebble, which could not even warn him of approaching misfortune! Whereas, my stone——!'

Hassan protested: 'But there was granted a sign! In his presence, from under my prayer-mat did I draw at hazard one of the slips of paper which Abu Bekr placed there before my very eyes. And on it "Yea" was written.'

'Thou deemest that a sign! Whose handwriting was on those slips? How dost thou know whether the word "Yea" was not written upon all of them?'

Hassan wagged his head feebly. 'In truth, I know not!'

'Thou shouldst have shrewder counsel ere thou givest thine only daughter to a dotard! And furthermore, remember, Youth cleaveth unto Youth! Now, Yār Muhammad, my son——'

Ghulam Mustafa broke off suddenly, and fixed his eyes on the river, where a strange thing was happening. One of the little twinkling boats had left the line of the flotilla, and came riding slowly over the ripples towards them. A moment later, it was bobbing against the steps.

'May it bring thee good fortune, O Hassan, my friend!' he exclaimed, as he lifted it from the water. He took out the tiny lamp. 'There is something besides,' he added. He fingered gingerly in the gauzy framework, drew forth a minute scroll of paper, and peered at it by the dim light of the lamp.

After a few seconds he turned excitedly to Hassan.

'Spake I not of a sign?' he cried. 'And, lo, here is one vouchsafed!'

Hassan, equally excited, entreated: 'Tell me, my friend! Tell me!'

'It is a portion of a verse from the Korān Sharif! From the chapter thereof entitled "Y.S."—*Bismillāh*! A "Y," and likewise an "S"!—Did I not speak to thee but now of Yār Muhammad and Sakinah?'

'Assuredly! Thou meanest, then——?'

'Nay, listen! There is yet more! Thus the verse runs:—he intoned the sonorous Arabic—"It is a sign that we carry their offspring in the ship." Thou seest? What is the damsel, Sakinah,

but thine offspring?—and in Yār Muhammad thou shalt find a son for thine old age, even as I do!’

Hassan exclaimed in astonishment: ‘*Ta’ajjub!* It is wonderful!’—and plunged into eager questioning.

Some two hours afterwards Ghulam Mustafa strode jubilantly homewards. Yār Muhammad had arrived there before him, carrying with him the great ball of thread by means of which, under cover of the darkness, within ear-shot of the unsuspecting Hassan, he had steered the magic vessel safely into port!

After their marriage, Yār Muhammad took his radiant fourteen-year-old bride home to his new lodging, close to that of his adoptive father. Hassan visited the young couple daily, and through influence obtained a post for his son-in-law—that of *chāshnigir*, the attendant whose duty it was to taste each dish ere it was placed before his royal master.

Hassan, however, was uneasy in his mind. Though the matter had never progressed as far as the actual betrothal of his daughter to Nādir Shah, he lived in hourly dread of a disappointed man’s revenge.

‘Who knows,’ he said, ‘what manifold occasions he may find to drip his venom in the ears of the Nawāb? In the hall of audience, at the banquet, when he stands behind our lord bearing the silver mace?’

Ghulam Mustafa sought to reassure him.

‘Certainly it is written that one should pray for deliverance from “the whisperer who slily withdraweth,”’ he rejoined. ‘Yet, in what manner can Nādir Shah harm us? Besides, should evil threaten, doubtless my stone’—from constant extolling of its virtues Ghulam Mustafa was beginning to believe in them himself!—‘would give us timely warning.’

Hassan wagged his head rather dubiously.

Nevertheless, the days passed without any sinister happening. Ghulam Mustafa busied himself with his own affairs. He had gained a footing in the Chief’s household. If, by some means, he could bring himself to the Nawāb’s notice, much benefit might accrue. And, once again, his luck favoured him.

On a glorious morning, Nawāb Bahādur Khan was minded to indulge in his favourite pastime, antelope-chasing with the *cheetah*, the hunting-leopard of India.

A princely figure, mounted on ‘Rustam,’ his great white Arab stallion, he set forth surrounded by a brilliant company. In rear

of the cavalcade rumbled flat-topped, sideless country carts, each of them drawn by a pair of bullocks; and upon each cart was chained a leopard, long-limbed, tawny, its sleek hide thickly spotted with black. Beside it sat its keeper holding a rope fixed to the strap which girt its slender loins. Until its prey were sighted, the leather hood screening its bright keen eyes would not be raised.

On the way to the feeding-grounds there was sport for the hawks, the riders galloping in their wake till they poised and went swooping downwards in narrowing circles above the slow-wheeling cranes.

At midday word was brought of a herd of deer grazing in the distance, and the line of carts moved forward over the cotton-fields. The deer would scarcely heed them: peasants and carts were objects they saw daily.

Two bow-shots from the herd the hood was slipped from a leopard's eyes, his bonds were loosened. For a moment he gazed ahead, then dropped on noiseless pads, prowled forward, and sprang to a crouching canter, masking his stealthy onset by every bush and inequality of ground. Then, suddenly, he stopped, flung up his head, peered savagely around him.

Those watching could guess what had halted him—some scented trail, of fox or wild-cat, crossing the line of his approach. But whilst he paused, restive and uncertain, his vigilant keeper, rushing up, thrust the shell of a coco-nut filled with powdered salt over his nostrils. He licked the salt, forgot what had puzzled him, and was set once more at his quarry.

A few lithe bounds and he was clear of the tangled scrub. Sighting him instantly on the open plain, the deer fled for their lives. And while they fled, chased by the yelling horsemen, the leopard raced to their flanks, skimming at break-neck speed the tussocks of wiry grass. One last, great, effortless leap to his victim's neck, and deer and leopard crashed headlong into a brushwood thicket while the herd swept on.

From the cool depths of the thicket there boomed straightway a din that checked the riders in mid-course! From the centre of it uprose the head and shoulders of a man—a tall, stout man bellowing with rage and terror as he floundered to safety regardless of the thorns which tore at his skin and clothing.

'*Yā hain!*' he roared. 'What a country is this, where a way-farer may not even slumber a little, unharmed, in the heat of the day——!'

He ceased his clamour as a man on a great white horse reined in beside him. A glance told him that it was the Nawāb himself, and he hastened to make his reverence, touching the back of his right hand to the ground, then placing it palm-downwards on his head.

With a twinkle in his eye the Nawāb regarded him.

'Thy name?' he queried.

'Ghulam Mustafa, O Prince!' The stout man's voice fell unconsciously into the singsong of the professional humbug. 'A poor Hāji——!'

'That can I see. How camest thou to be here?'

'Lord! For no evil purpose! I did but rest awhile. I had gone early to a village where lieth a man sick of a fever, taking with me my magic stone——'

The Nawāb laughed good-humouredly.

'I have heard of thee and thy stone!'

'Of surpassing virtue!' cried Ghulam Mustafa. 'Some day, if my lord permits——?'

'Some day thou shalt show it me. Meanwhile, since thou hast received no hurt——' The Nawāb wheeled his horse.

But Gulam Mustafa was not one to let an opportunity pass.

'O Prince!' he cried. 'True it is that I have not been torn in pieces by lions; but my *hugqa*—my little *hugqa*——!' His voice broke in a sob.

'What ails thy *hugqa*, then?'

'Behold, my Prince!' Ghulam Mustafa pointed through the gap he had made in the bushes. Close to where the leopard crouched lazily lapping the blood of his victim, there lay on the grass the broken portions of a cheap *bazār* tobacco-pipe.

'My cherished *hugqa*!' he wailed. 'The gift of my dead father!'

The Nawāb laughed merrily. The spectacle of this big, fat man bemoaning his trumpery loss tickled his fancy.

'Thy misfortune is soon remedied!' he announced, with mock gravity. He signed to an attendant, who brought forward his master's silver-mounted Persian *nargileh*.

'It is thine, O Hāji!' said the Nawāb, with a gracious wave of his hand. 'Like thee, I have made the journey to Mecca the Holy. Wherefore, we are brothers!'

Ghulam Mustafa raised his eyes heavenwards. '*Allah karim!*' he ejaculated, whimsically pressing his advantage. 'God is merciful! Thou, my Prince, art merciful! But how shall I guard this jewel against the robbers of the city? I live wretchedly in one

small room leased to me by a devil in the shape of a woman ! If I had but a suitable dwelling——'

The Nawāb shouted with laughter. The quaint conceit pleased him.

'Thou rogue !' he cried, hugely delighted. 'That also shall be granted thee ! There shall be built for thee a house in which thou mayest keep safely both thy pipe—and thy stone !'

Still chuckling with enjoyment of his jest, he passed on, his retinue clattering behind him.

One night, soon after dark, there came a knock at Ghulam Mustafa's door.

He opened it, and Hassan crept in, his lean visage haggard with anxiety. Closing the door, he glanced timorously about him, as though scared even to speak. He seated himself and bent forward, whispering :

'Nādir Shah has bought poison in the *bazār* !'

Ghulam Mustafa's face became grave.

'How dost thou know this ?'

'Abdul Ghafur, the beggar, brought me warning. For a month, at my charges, he has spied on Nādir Shah's doings.'

'Of what kind was the poison ? *Datūra* ?'

'Nay ; the burning poison of Arabia. Through it death comes more swiftly.'

Ghulam Mustafa nodded. For a time he sat without speaking. Then he asserted positively :

'Neither for you nor for me did he purchase it ! We be men living singly, cooking our own food. He could not tamper with it. Moreover, it was Yār Muhammad who robbed him of Sakinah.'

Hassan quavered : 'But how could he harm him ? Sakinah cooks for her husband, and Nādir Shah dare not go nigh their dwelling.' His companion laughed scornfully.

'The better, that, for Nādir Shah ! Suspicion is less likely to fall on him. Thou fool !—canst thou not guess ? Hast thou forgotten the morrow's banquet, when thy son-in-law, by virtue of his office, must try each dish before his master tastes it ?'

Hassan stared, aghast. 'Poison in the food of the Nawāb Sahib ?' he stammered.

'What risk will there be to our lord ? Before ever he takes a mouthful, Yār Muhammad will be writhing in torment. And who shall say how the poison came there ?'

'It is indeed possible !' Hassan admitted.

‘Allah alone has the “five keys of secret knowledge”!’ returned his friend sententiously. ‘But he gave men wits for a purpose! And this is Nādir Shah’s opportunity!’

So the next night, among the crowd in the brilliantly lighted banqueting-hall, Ghulam Mustafa, Hassan beside him, took his stand watchful and expectant, his keen eyes fixed on Nādir Shah’s ill-humoured countenance.

The feast was in honour of the birthday anniversary of Nawāb Bahadur Khan’s small son and heir. That morning his mother had tied the seventh knot in the string of record. The day had been spent in rejoicing: sport for the palace, games for the populace, bounteous gifts for the poor. After the banquet would come the illuminations and fireworks.

In his robes of state, a diamond and emerald ornament glittering in his high black velvet Mughal cap, the Nawāb sat cross-legged on his cushions, burly and genial, his nobles and courtiers around him. At his father’s side the youthful Nawābzādah trifled with his sweetmeats, sipped from his cup of rose-scented *sharbat* till he fell asleep. From behind the great gauze curtain at one end of the hall flashed now and again a sparkling beam of light from a jewelled neck or arm, came a ripple of laughter, as the ladies of the Court, screened from the eyes of men, tittered over a nautch-girl’s sallies, enjoyed the puppet-show and the antics of the tumblers. The lofty, gilded roof resounded to the strains of lutes and zithers, to the thudding tap of the musicians’ fingers on the drums.

As course succeeded course without untoward happening, Hassan breathed more freely.

‘*Shukr Allah!*’ he murmured. ‘Thanks be to God! The banquet draws to its close without disaster!’

At that instant Ghulam Mustafa gripped him by the arm.

‘Nādir Shah’s place is empty!’ he whispered.

Hassan turned his head and saw that his friend spoke truly. Nādir Shah had propped his silver mace against a pillar, and had vanished.

Slipping through the throng of onlookers, Ghulam Mustafa questioned a scullion bearing a mighty bowl of Persian green stone to the serving-room. It was a curry of locusts, the scullion told him, locusts and honey and rice, a favourite dish of the Chief.

Ghulam Mustafa did not hesitate: he was sure now beyond all doubt! Among the crowd in the serving-room Nādir Shah, or an accomplice, would find the means to do his devilish work! Only

a second would be needed—and if Yār Muhammad tasted even a mouthful, he would die!

Ghulam Mustafa elbowed his way back. As an attendant advanced into the hall carrying the bowl to be placed in the 'taster's' hands, he struggled through to the front and prostrated himself.

'O Prince!' he shouted. 'In the name of Allah, grant thy slave this favour! Let no one eat of that accursed dish till I have spoken!'

There followed a buzz of amazement, and the Chief demanded angrily, 'Art thou mad? How durst thou thrust thyself unbidden into my presence?'

Ghulam Mustafa rose to his feet, and cried, with folded hands, 'Pardon, O Prince! I seek but to prove the innocence of one man, and the guilt of another!' He pointed to where Yār Muhammad stood bewildered, holding the bowl. 'If my Lord permits, let him be ordered, not to taste, but to partake heartily of the food therein!'

For a second or two the Chief deliberated; then he gave the order.

'Eat!' he commanded imperiously.

Still wondering, Yār Muhammad plunged his fingers deep into the bowl. But before they could reach his mouth, Ghulam Mustafa sprang forward and snatched the vessel from his grasp.

'My Lord has seen,' he questioned triumphantly, 'how Yār Muhammad, my son, was ready to obey? Would a guilty man have been thus willing? And now, let Nādir Shah be given the same command!'

Search was made, and Nādir Shah came boldly. He had but left the hall for an instant, he said, to obtain a drink of water.

The Nawāb's gaze fastened on him sternly.

'It is my pleasure that thou shouldst eat from yonder dish in my presence!' he ordered.

Nādir Shah's face turned ashen, his limbs quivered, as though from a palsy.

'Master!' he implored, 'since five days I have been a sick man! Food is forbidden me! I dare not——!' The sweat stood on his forehead, and his voice died away in a mutter.

'Hast thou not heard me? Do as I bade thee, thou dog!' the Nawāb thundered.

Nādir Shah flung up his arms, gasping.

'Lord! It was never meant for thee——!' he shrieked, and pitched forward senseless to the marble floor.

When the guards had carried him away, the Chief, sharply suspicious, bent his looks on Ghulam Mustafa.

'Thy certainty of Nādir Shah's offence argues foreknowledge!' he affirmed. 'How didst thou come by it?'

Ghulam Mustafa answered promptly. 'Lord! he was Yār Muhammad's enemy and mine; and it has pleased Allah to grant me some small measure of discernment.' A whimsical smile stole over his features, and he went on: 'Then, too, as my Lord may remember, there is in my possession a miraculous stone——'

For a moment longer the Nawāb sat eyeing the stout, smiling figure before him; then, his good humour restored, he burst into laughter.

'Thou and thy magic stone!' he exclaimed. 'I have indeed heard much of it—and of thee!' His eyes twinkled. 'There was a matter of certain goats——?'

'It procured me food when I was hungry; it saved my life from a Thug; through my Lord's own favour it brought me a *huqqa* and a house——'

The Chief raised his hand. 'Enough!' He looked fixedly at Ghulam Mustafa. He was no mean judge of a man. 'It is clear that thy talents and those of thy stone should be at the service of the State!' he continued, after a pause. 'To-morrow there will be vacant the post of Second Chamberlain, when Aslam Khan—he shot a sardonic glance at that erring Minister—'has been dismissed therefrom for babbling my confidences! Dost think thou canst fill that office?'

Overwhelmed, Ghulam Mustafa replied humbly: 'With the help of Allah, the trust of my Prince, and the aid of the stone.'

So, by the Chief's decree, Ghulam Mustafa was granted the post of Second Chamberlain and a *khilat* of honour: a coat of rich brocade, a turban, a sword and embroidered belt.

His roving days were ended, and for many years he lived, growing ever higher in the esteem of his master. Exalted to Wazīr, he dealt justly with those under him, bearing always in mind the uncertainty of existence and the injunction of Hazrat 'Isa—Rūhu'llah, the Spirit from God:

*'This world is a bridge: pass over it,
but build no house thereon.'*

The stone was set in a ring of gold. Yār Muhammad's little son wore it round his fat, brown neck as an amulet.

LEONARDO DA VINCI.

BY GODFREY LOCKER-LAMPSON.

WITH what a magnetic attraction a great spirit can draw us to itself! He may have failed in life, his hopes and ambitions may have foundered, his enemies, more calculating than he, may have triumphed over him, even trampled him in the dust, or passed him in the race for riches and honour, but for this we care nothing. On the contrary, we glory in it. That unsuccess should have dogged his footsteps, that he should have been spurned or neglected, makes us only more fanatical in our devotion, and we enshrine him in our memories and hearts for evermore. Or he may have been conspicuously successful, and then we try to invent some misfortune for him, some hidden malady of circumstance that robbed him of his full reward. For affection must discover some weakness, some piece of ill-luck, some damaging criticism, since the championing of a hero can never attain the sublime self-forgetfulness that makes human love a sacred rite, except it be yoked to the protective instinct.

A supreme work of art depicting some moment in the tragedy of life has the same inherent fascination for us. The transfiguration of failure, the enthronement of unsuccess, is what helps to make a great picture so especially dear to us. Our hearts are in tune with the sharp contrast between the scurvy treatment meted out by Fate and its transformation by genius into victory, and we are lifted out of ourselves. Leonardo's life and work are each characterised by this duality. The subject-matter of his craftsmanship is calculated to produce the feeling of exaltation described above in an exceptional degree, whilst his own personal career, largely frustrated by agencies apparently within his own control, give him an irresistible claim upon our interest, making him the most remarkable personality in all the realm of art.

There are two authentic portraits of Leonardo da Vinci, both of them drawings and representing the artist as an old man. The first, now in the Royal Library at Windsor, is a sketch in red chalk. It shows Leonardo in profile, with a refined and noble head, and with much of the havoc wreaked by the years left out. Although doubtless a good likeness, it is but a copy of what was probably an original study done in Milan by an admiring and

loving pupil, who has somewhat idealised his subject and eliminated the grosser manifestations of the flesh. The brow is calm, rising almost perpendicularly to a dome-shaped crown, the nose aquiline, and the mouth, with its shaven upper lip, clear cut and sensitive. Long, fine hair falls in waving masses to the shoulder, concealing the ear, and a patriarchal beard reaches to the breast. The head is that of a poet and sage, as he appeared to those who worshipped daily at the shrine of his genius.

The second portrait, also a drawing in red chalk, is by Leonardo himself, and is now in the Royal Library at Turin. It has the appearance of a later date and is a far more powerful and interesting sketch. It is the almost facing head of a very old man, with the furrows, pouches, and wrinkles of many years of storm and toil. The nose is broad and beaked, the shaggy eyebrows jut out like pent-houses, and the mouth is turned down at the corners, grim and determined. It is a fierce old face. You would not ask this veteran too many questions, nor foolish ones. The hair is thinner than in the first portrait, but still falls in abundant waves. It is the headpiece of a man of action, accustomed to be obeyed and to make rapid decisions. With those piercing eyes he has daunted opposition for many a long day and still rules his kingdom.

What a reputation this intrepid old fellow has left behind him for achievement unsurpassed and, indeed, in his own manner, unequalled !

According to the most reliable tradition, he was born at Vinci, about twenty miles from Florence, in the year 1452. While still a mere boy he entered the studio of Andrea del Verrocchio, painter and sculptor, where among his fellow pupils were Lorenzo di Credi and Perugino. There he remained for over a decade. It was under the eye of Verrocchio that, as a lad of seventeen, he painted what was probably his first picture—'The Annunciation'—now in the Louvre, a composition in tempera and oil, full of grace and delicacy, and bearing the promise of greater achievement. It was during this period also that he received two commissions which, however, were never carried out. One was from the State for an altarpiece for the chapel in the Palazzo Vecchio, dedicated to St. Bernard, a commission finally undertaken by Filippino. The other, a few years later, was for another altarpiece for the monks of San Donato a Scopeto, a commission likewise not executed, and eventually also carried out by the same master. 'The Adoration of the Magi,' which in its unfinished state now hangs in the Uffizi, was in all likelihood intended for them, as Filippino chose

the same theme and his picture clearly reveals his acquaintance with Leonardo's composition.

Shortly after leaving Verrocchio's studio he painted the unfinished 'St. Jerome in the Desert.' For a long time this work was lost to view until the torso was eventually discovered, used as a box-cover, in a shop in Rome, and soon afterwards the head was brought to light in a shoemaker's shop. The panels were thereupon rejoined, and the picture was purchased by Pope Pius IX. for the Vatican collection, where it now is. It was during these early years at Florence that he painted the lately discovered 'Benois Madonna,' which should still be in the Hermitage Gallery at Petrograd. The supposed portrait of Ginevra Benci in the Lichtenstein Gallery at Vienna is, owing to a certain lack of idealism, of more doubtful attribution, but if from his hand was painted about the same time. 'The Madonna of the Rocks,' painted originally on wood and later transferred to canvas and now in the Louvre, was also begun, but may have been finished later.

Towards the end of 1481 or the beginning of 1482 Leonardo took one of the crucial steps of his life and left for Milan. He had undertaken to do important work for Ludovico il Moro, of the house of Sforza, in the departments of painting, sculpture, and architecture, hoping that at last he would find an ampler outlet for the restless ambition and volcanic energy which he felt ever boiling within him. The letter which he wrote to the Prince recommending himself for the post is worth quoting, if only to show his limitless confidence in his own powers. The final note of humility after the tremendous trumpet blasts of self-esteem lends a touch of ironic humour.

'MOST ILLUSTRIOUS LORD,—Having now sufficiently considered the specimens of all those who proclaim themselves skilled contrivers of instruments of war, and that the invention and operation of the said instruments are nothing different to those in common use: I shall endeavour, without prejudice to any one else, to explain myself to your Excellency showing your Lordship my secrets, and then offering them to your best pleasure and approbation to work with effect at opportune moments as well as all those things which in part shall be briefly noted below.

'1. I have a sort of extremely light and strong bridge adapted to be most easily carried, and with them you may pursue, and at any time flee from the enemy and others, secure and indestructible by fire and battle, easy and convenient to lift and place. Also methods of burning and destroying those of the enemy.

'2. I know how, when a place is besieged, to take the water out of the trenches, and make endless variety of bridges, and covered ways and ladders, and other machines pertaining to such expeditions.

'3. Item. If, by reason of the height of the banks or of the strength of the place and its position, it is impossible when besieging a place, to avail oneself of the plan of bombardment, I have methods for destroying every rock or other fortress, even if it were founded on a rock, &c.

'4. Again, I have kinds of mortars; most convenient and easy to carry; and with these can fling small stones almost resembling a storm; and with the smoke of these causing great terror to the enemy, to his great detriment and confusion.

'5. Item. I have means by secret and tortuous mines and ways, made without noise, to reach a designated [spot], even if it were needed to pass under a trench or a river.

'6. Item. I will make covered chariots, safe and indestructible, which entering among the enemy with their artillery, there is no body of men so great but they would break them. And behind these, infantry could follow quite unhurt and without any hindrance.

'7. Item. In case of need I will make big guns, mortars and light ordnance of fine and useful forms, out of the common type.

'8. Where the operation of bombardment should fail, I would contrive catapults, mangonels, trabocchi and other machines of marvellous efficacy and not in common use. And in short, according to the variety of cases, I can contrive various and endless means of offence and defence.

'9. And if the fight should be at sea I have kinds of many machines most efficient for offence and defence; and vessels which will resist the attack of the largest guns and powder and fumes.

'10. In time of peace I believe I can give perfect satisfaction and to the equal of any other in architecture and the composition of buildings public and private; and in guiding water from one place to another.

'Item. I can carry out sculpture in marble, bronze or clay, and also in painting whatever may be done, and as well as any other, be he who he may. Again, the bronze horse may be taken in hand, which is to be the immortal glory and eternal honour of the prince your father of happy memory, and of the illustrious house of Sforza.

'And if any one of the above mentioned things seems to anyone to be impossible or not feasible, I am most ready to make the experiment in your park, or in whatever place may please your Excellency—to whom I commend myself with the utmost humility, &c.'¹

¹ *Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, edited by J. P. Richter.

He remained at Milan for seventeen years, till the end of 1499 or the beginning of 1500. During this period he was engaged particularly on two great creations—the equestrian statue in bronze of Francesco Sforza, the father of his patron, and what became the most celebrated picture in the world, the fresco of ‘The Last Supper’ on the wall of the refectory of Santa Maria della Grazia. The first of these never got beyond the clay model, which was itself destroyed in the wars shortly afterwards, while the second, although more or less finished, is now a pathetic and almost total ruin.

It was at Milan that he also probably finished the ‘Vierge aux Rochers,’ which was begun in Florence and is now in the Louvre. He had originally executed this picture for the Chapel of the Conception in the Church of St. Francesco, but there arose a dispute with the Brotherhood as to the price to be paid for it, and it was transferred to another and more open-handed buyer. A copy, chiefly made by Ambrogio de Predis, but with Leonardo’s collaboration, and with improvements in composition, was sold to the Brotherhood in its place, and now hangs in the National Gallery. He is known to have finished at least one other picture, the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, and he may have also painted the portrait of Lucrezia Crivelli, these two ladies being the successive favourites of Ludovico. The portrait of Lucrezia Crivelli, if ever executed, has not yet been identified, the picture in the Louvre bearing her name being almost certainly not her portrait nor by the hand of Leonardo. The portrait of Cecilia Gallerani now hangs in the Czartoriski Municipal Gallery at Cracow. It was at Milan too that he painted the ‘Portrait of a Musician’ in the Galleria Ambrosiana there, and wrote his ‘Treatise on Painting,’ where he laid down the rules for success in art.

On the invasion of the Duchy by the French in 1499 and the downfall of Ludovico, Leonardo left Milan. With what hopes he had gone there, and how little he had accomplished of all that he had set out to do! Even what he did has for the greater part perished or been lost. Except for the peeling wall of the famous refectory, there is no visible record there of his long residence of nigh on twenty years. After visiting Venice he went to Mantua, where he sketched the portrait of Isabella d’Este, which is supposed to be identified in the cartoon that is now in the Louvre. From Mantua he returned home to Florence. In 1502 he was commissioned by Caesar Borgia to inspect his fortresses, and travelled through central Italy for this purpose. The following year he was

back in Florence and remained there till 1506. It was during this sojourn that he received the order to paint the 'Battle of Anghiari,' the engagement in 1440 in which the Florentines defeated the Milanese, for the Council Chamber of the Palazzo Vecchio. He completed the vast cartoon for it in the Sala del Papa in the Convent of Santa Maria Novella, and painted a group from it—'The Struggle for the Standard'—on the wall of the Council Chamber. The work, however, was never finished, the fresco was destroyed, and the cartoon has perished. It was while at Florence that he also painted the portrait of 'Mona Lisa,' wife of Francesco del Giocondo, the most discussed picture in the history of art, and also probably the 'St. Anne,' which again was never completed. The cartoon, in *chiaroscuro*, for this latter subject, which is at present in a backwater in the Diploma Gallery in Burlington House, and therefore scarcely known to the general public, and which is somewhat less excellent in composition, although not in its magnificent drawing, was possibly executed at this time as an intermediate study for the picture. The fine group of 'St. Anne' in the Leuchtenberg Gallery in Petrograd was probably painted by Salaino, but in accordance with Leonardo's design and with his help. In 1506 he obtained the permission of the Signoria of Florence to return to Milan for three months, but his visit was extended to nearly twelve at the express wish of Louis XII of France, who wanted some pictures painted, including a portrait of himself.

In 1507 he was back in Florence, but he is found again in Milan two years later in the position of official court painter to the French king, who made him a grant of twelve inches of water from the Gazzano Canal. It was during the period of this later sojourn in Milan that he designed and supervised the recently discovered painting of the 'Leda,' which was executed by his pupil Salaino, with his collaboration, and is to-day in the collection of Cav. L. de Spiridon in Rome. Leonardo's cartoon for it, which was seen in Milan by an English traveller as late as the year 1712, has unfortunately been lost. In 1513 he went to Rome, where he remained for a year and a half in the service of Giuliano de' Medici. On the death of Louis XII he became court painter to his successor, and crossed the Alps with Francis I in 1516. He had looked for the last time upon his native land.

It was in the service of Francis I that he painted the half-length figure of 'John the Baptist,' now in the Louvre, and the portrait of a Florentine lady which has not been identified. From this

time onwards his health began to fail. His right hand became paralysed, and although he was not improbably left-handed—as can be verified in the Victoria and Albert Museum, where three of his little vellum-covered notebooks are preserved, the contents of which are written backwards and left to right—the crippling of the other hand impeded the full use of his artistic power. He continued to make a few occasional sketches, such probably as his own portrait, but chiefly contented himself with directing the work of his beloved assistant, Francesco Melzi.

An account has been left by one who was present of a visit paid to him at Cloux on October 10, 1516, by the Cardinal of Aragon :

‘Itinerary of Most Rev. and Illustrious Monsignore, the Cardinal of Aragon, commencing from the city of Ferrara in the year of our Saviour 1516 in the month of May, described by me Dom. Antonio de Beatis, Clerk, of Amalfi.

‘On the 10th of October (1516) from Tours . . . he went to Amboise. . . . In one of the towns, my Lord (*i.e.* the Card. of Aragon) went with the rest of us to see Messer Lunardo Vinci, the Florentine, who is more than 70 years old, the greatest painter of pictures of our time. He showed his Excellency three pictures, one of a certain Florentine woman done from the life, at the instance of the late Magnifico Giuliano de Medici. The other was of a young St. John the Baptist and the third was a Madonna and Child on the knees of St. Anne, all three of them very perfect. Although, owing to a sort of paralysis which has affected his right hand, good work is no more to be expected of him, he has formed a Milanese pupil of his who works extremely well. And although the said master Leonardo cannot paint with the delicacy which was customary with him, yet he still busies himself in making drawings and instructing others. This gentleman has written in great detail on anatomy and demonstrated it with illustrations of the limbs, muscles, nerves, veins, intestines, and as much as can be spoken of, of the bodies of both men and women, to a degree never yet done by any other person. The which we have seen with our own eyes, and indeed he said he had anatomized over 50 bodies, male and female of all ages. He has also written on the nature of water, on various machines and other things, as he said, many volumes, all in the vernacular, which if published will be useful and very pleasant.’¹

Finally, on May 2, 1519, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, in the Château of Cloux in Touraine, his kingly spirit gave itself up.

¹ Extracted from G. Uzielli, *Ricerche intorno a Leonardo da Vinci*. From a MS. in the National Library at Naples.

France had the honour of providing the sepulchre for the fretted body, which was buried in the Chapel dedicated to St. Florentin in the Castle of Amboise. This building no longer exists, but on its site were discovered some years ago what were believed to be the remains of the great artist. They were deposited in a leaden box, and the Chapel of St. Hubert within the castle walls now holds all that is left of him.

These are the chief authenticated milestones in Leonardo's life. He never married and, so far as is known, never had a romance nor even an intrigue. His intense and almost superhuman labours left no time nor desire for dalliance or sexual love. In some ways it was a tragic life. He lived in a fever of intellectual activity. There was nothing that he put his mind to which he was not conscious, given the time, of being able to do supremely well. Painting was merely one of the many arts and sciences which claimed the attention of this myriad-minded genius. At times these mistresses trod so closely upon one another's heels that he scarcely knew which to propitiate and which to refuse. Thus he was handicapped from the very start and could give no complete satisfaction in any quarter. At different times, and almost at the same time in some cases, he threw himself with all his giant energies into the study of poetry, hydraulics, philosophy, anatomy, geometry and mathematics, sculpture, biology, acoustics, chemistry, the flight of birds and aeronautics, minerals, architecture, mechanics, physics, painting, optics, music, engineering and, lastly, geology, his notes on which show that he was three centuries ahead of his age.

In the notes which he jotted down from day to day he seems often to have anticipated some of the great discoveries and inventions made long afterwards. Among these may be mentioned the theory of motion, magnetic attraction, the composition of explosives, the laws of friction and gravitation, the reflection of the earth on the moon, the classification of vertebrate and invertebrate animals, the elevation of the continents, the tidal movement of waters, the laws of combustion and respiration, the undulatory theory of light and heat, the *camera obscura*, steam as a motive power in navigation, the circulation of the blood. Hallam, in his 'Literature in Europe,' says :

'His greatest literary distinction is derived from those short fragments of his unpublished writings that appeared not many years since, and which, according, at least, to our common estimate of the age in which he lived, are more like revelations of physical

truths vouchsafed to a single mind than the superstructure of its reasoning upon any established basis. The discoveries which made Galileo, and Kepler, and Maestlin, and Maurolyeus, and Castelli, and other names illustrious, the system of Copernicus, the very theories of recent geologists, are anticipated by Da Vinci, within the compass of a few pages, not perhaps in the most precise language, or on the most conclusive reasoning, but so as to strike us with something like the awe of praeternatural knowledge.'

In the midst of one of these multifarious pursuits he would turn feverishly to another, and the result was that practically nothing was finished of what he undertook. This last trait was notorious among his contemporaries. Bandello, in his Introduction to 'Novella 58,' Part I, describes how 'The Last Supper' came to be painted and says :

'I have seen him too, even as the fancy or whim took him, at mid-day when the sun is in the sign of the Lion, go out from the Corte Vecchia where he was composing that stupendous model of the horse, and go straight to the Grazie, and having got up on his scaffolding, take the brush and give one or two strokes to one of his figures and then suddenly depart and go elsewhere.'

Again Pietro da Novellara informed Isabella d'Este in 1502 that 'his mathematical experiments have withdrawn him from painting to such an extent, that he cannot endure the sight of a brush.'

His thirst for knowledge was insatiable, his curiosity inappetisable. He was a man of science first and foremost—accurate, exploring, inventive, indefatigable. It was this—the urge he felt to tear the roots out of every problem, to lay bare the secrets and hidden springs of action—that rendered the full application of the knowledge gained impossible. With standards so exacting nothing ever could be finished. Of all the great artists of the day, with the same length of life, opportunity, and renown, he has left behind him less, far less than any other. The completed pictures that have come down to us may be counted on the fingers of one hand. Some no doubt were lost or destroyed, but, even so, the slenderness of his legacy in quantity, though not in quality, cannot be accounted for except that his very temperament, the universal character of his genius, debarred him from concentrating the full use of his powers on any one department of art. Had it been different, had Leonardo focused his unparalleled gifts upon painting, had he not dissipated them over so extensive and various a field, what he has

left is amply sufficient to prove that his legacy would then have surpassed any that the world has yet seen.

As soon as he had solved the difficulty of the delineation of a subject—some emotion, grouping, incident, feature, or whatever it might be—he seemed to tire of it, so that we frequently find studies for pictures that were never executed. Yet what vast and conscientious labour he must have expended upon the mastery of the art of painting. His treatise on the subject, and the sketches that are preserved in Paris, Venice, Windsor, and elsewhere, are proof of this, evidence of how he would return again and again to the portrayal of some transient look or gesture until he was satisfied that he had achieved what could not be bettered; and these sketches can only be a mere fragment of the multitude of drawings that he must have made. To-day a feeling of pity is aroused by this inveterate wastage of power and dissipation of effort—pity and infinite regret—for had the same godlike equipment been conserved for that single branch of art in which he was so consummate a captain, the world would have been enriched with many an added masterpiece of deathless beauty.

Some measure may be gained of his unrivalled range and quality in such a work as the unfinished cartoon of 'The Adoration of the Magi' in the Uffizi, where intensity of individual expression, combined with dramatic interest and masterly grouping, has never been surpassed; or in the sweet and tender faces of the angel with the glistening curls in the 'Vierge aux Rochers' in the National Gallery, and of the silver-point drawing of the 'Madonna Litta' in the Louvre; or in a beautiful study of two hands at Windsor; or in the lovely figure of the 'Leda,' where the perfection of the female form has never been improved upon; or, again, in the playful charm of the lightning pen-and-ink drawing preserved in the British Museum of 'The Madonna with a Cat,' that one among several studies for the same subject in the collection which, with its enclosing line, rounded at the top, to indicate a frame, was evidently meant as a sketch for a picture, where the child is seated on the Mother's left knee hugging a large cat which is struggling to free itself, and where all three figures are looking in the same direction. Or in the spirited sketches of horsemen at Windsor, where one of the galloping steeds anticipates the revelations of instantaneous photography; or in two magnificent studies of drapery in the Louvre, one for the cloak of the Madonna in the 'St. Anne,' and the other for the cloak of another seated figure, probably also that

of a Madonna ; or, lastly, in the violent action and furious mêlés of foot and horse in the various pen sketches in the Accademia at Venice and elsewhere, perhaps the earliest ideas of fights for the lost cartoon of 'The Battle of Anghiari.' These examples might be multiplied. They are cited to show the scope of this remarkable genius, who seems to have mastered the portrayal of every emotion he wished to depict, but, as soon as he had done so, tired in the accomplishment, and laid his work aside incomplete and forgotten.

To be an artist of the first rank it is not enough that he should merely present an external resemblance to a human being, with the imitative colouring and exact measurement between this feature and that. He must have the framework of his subject always in mind and, as it were, lay upon this bony structure the tendons and flesh and more perishable parts of the human body. He must clothe the skeleton. The spectator should be able to see the building up of the body upon the canvas, just as in fact it is so built by the hand of its Maker. In addition he must animate his picture with the spiritual essence of the original, the consciousness of self that constitutes personality. Without this trinity the representation is incomplete, and it is only the greatest masters who can compass it. It is here that Leonardo was supreme. So few of his completed pictures have survived the perils of five centuries that what remains cannot do adequate justice to what must have been his scope and power. But if the three foregoing ingredients, combined as they may be, are essential conditions for truthful portrayal, enough of his work has come down to us to prove that in each one of them there could scarcely have been a greater master.

There are three of his pictures that illustrate this partnership in an exceptional degree. One of them is the unfinished portrait of a musician in the Galleria Ambrosiana at Milan. Parts of this painting are probably by another hand, but the head bears all the marks of being by Leonardo himself. It is the half-length portrait of a broad-shouldered, thick-necked young man in the prime of life holding a musical score in his right hand. He is wearing a skull-cap, and from under it flows a rich mane of curling and abundant hair. The face is shaven, the locks depend low upon the broad brow, the eyes are large and luminous, the eyebrows long and straight, the nose broad and slightly bridged, the chin and jaws strong, and the mouth eager and half open as though about to speak. The dress is so contrived, a black coat with a rim of white collar and broad light shoulder bands, as to harmonise with the lights

and shadows of the lean and powerful face. Here is a young man with his career before him, vital, intelligent, confident in himself, looking out upon the world with ideals of clean conduct and honest labour, and withal a pleasant companion with a sense of humour. In this energetic head the three conditions of truthful portraiture are conspicuous. It is as though the artist had first fashioned the bony structure of the face, the solid framework of cheek, brow, nose, and jaw; had then clothed it with muscle and cartilage and flesh, and to consummate his work had finally breathed into it the undying spirit of youth. The actual order of creation seems to be here repeated, and you get the splendid flower of manhood at its best.

Another picture representing the Madonna, St. Anne and the Holy Child, is unfinished and hangs in the Louvre. Certain parts of it are in all probability by one of Leonardo's pupils, but the central figure of St. Anne, which has affinities of style with that of 'Mona Lisa,' is without any doubt by Leonardo himself. She is seated in calm nobility facing the spectator, and the Madonna is sitting sideways upon her lap, with her arms stretched out holding the little boy who is playing with a lamb. In the background is a river flowing through a rocky landscape, with a tall dark tree in the right-hand corner. St. Anne is gazing downward, with her left hand upon her hip. She is robed in black, with a gauze-like band across her brow and a veil over her hair. The outstanding feature of this picture is the grandmother's head. Although the three figures are in close contact, St. Anne is, as it were, remote, as she sits there with her eyes upon the other two. This effect is obtained by the principal figure appearing to be in slight penumbra and therefore less distinct, whereas the Madonna and Child are in the full light of day. St. Anne is shadowy as compared with them, and looks like a sibyl brooding over the scene. She scarcely seems to be corporeal, and the spirituality of her countenance, shrouded in this semi-light, has never been surpassed in art. She is smiling with an exquisitely tender expression, but half sadly, and her pale face is full of shadows. Far more than in the 'Mona Lisa' can you read here knowledge of the world, of its vanity and pain, sublimed into love. It is an immortal creation, the work of a great dramatist who knew the human heart. Here again, although dominated by its spiritual content, you are conscious of the building up of bone and flesh for the housing of the incorporeal element.

The third picture, which has unfortunately suffered from injudicious restoration, is the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani in the

Czartoriski Municipal Gallery in Cracow. Its identity has been practically established during recent years, not only by the undoubted similarity of the features to those of two other probable portraits of the same lady, one of which is in the Galleria Ambrosiana at Milan, but by the fact that the painting is undoubtedly by Leonardo and was executed in his earlier Florentine manner when he had just arrived in Milan, which would make the picture synchronise with the period when we know he made such a portrait, and when Cecilia Gallerani was of that tender age such as is shown in the painting. The portrait is also in all probability wholly by Leonardo's own hand, a rare event. It was lent by the sitter to one of her friends, the Marchesana Isabella d'Este, at the latter's request. Isabella had remembered, so she wrote, seeing Leonardo's portrait of Cecilia about fourteen years before, and wanted it for a few days in order to compare it with portraits painted by Giovanni Bellini. In despatching it Cecilia observed: 'I would send it the more willingly if it resembled me. And let not your Highness think that that arises from any fault of the master, for in truth I do not think his equal is to be found, but only that this portrait was made when I was still at so youthful an age that I have since wholly changed, so much so that no one seeing it and me together would think it to have been made for me.' Had the picture been painted in collaboration with another, the writer would have been aware of it, and almost certainly have mentioned it to Isabella.

Ludovico's favourite is seen in the heyday of her youth and charm, a girl of seventeen. She is holding an ermine in her arms, an alert little creature with a small pointed head which seems almost alive, so wonderfully is it drawn. Her body is turned to the front and slightly towards the right, while her head is turned three-quarters to the left, a scheme of composition known as *contrapposto*, noticeable in several of Leonardo's pictures, and which gives here an extraordinary impression of unstudied ease. It must have been a vivid and speaking likeness. She is wearing a low-necked dress with long sleeves, and her head is enveloped in a transparent and closely fitting cap or net which passes beneath her chin and covers her brow to the delicately pencilled eyebrows. Her hair which is visible through its gauze-like covering is parted in the middle, and a necklace of beads goes twice round her neck and falls almost to her waist. Her eyes are large and observant and far apart, the nose straight and finely modelled, and on the slightly compressed lips there is a scarcely perceptible smile. She is maidenhood personified with her smooth cheek, the purity of her outlines, and

her childlike look of innocence and inexperience. She is thinking of her little pet which her right hand is protecting, and is anxious that it should show to the same advantage as herself. Whatever may have been her character or career, the very spirit of youth looks out of this girl's eyes ; the immaculate contours of the flesh and the virginal mouth proclaim her tender years, and yet so truthfully to nature is she limned that the immortal part of her, as well as the lovely form of budding womanhood, do not conceal from the spectator what one of these days must crumble into dust.

The familiar axiom that genius is the infinite capacity for taking pains is founded upon truth. For the amount of truth in any creation of man's depends upon the active recognition of those relationships which in their entirety constitute a knowable thing. The mind is for ever groping after these, in order that it may present to itself a completer and therefore more truthful view. And the intellect that can present to others some aspect of whatever it may be, where those relations are so selected and associated as to emphasise that they are only a limited portion of the infinite totality, has the quality of genius greater or less. But to achieve this entails ungrudged and ceaseless pains, for it is the result of knowledge, and knowledge can only be the fruit of labour.

The reason that a photograph contains less truth than a fine picture of the same subject is because the former is supposed to give a representation of a thing which from the start is identical for all eyes. In other words, it purports to put on record what all see, nothing but what they see, and everything that they see. The supposition is that the camera reveals the visible, that is, that the observer would detect nothing in the original but what is thereby revealed. But no object is the same for all eyes or for any two pairs of eyes. A picture should be the representation of an object as the artist himself sees it, and as this personal visualisation cannot be omitted in any truthful presentation, since it constitutes the very fact of the thing being an object for him, a good picture is a more truthful interpretation than that of a photograph can ever be, which presupposes the presentation of an object as all men would exactly see it at the moment. A beautiful work of art brings out a number of relationships which the spectator may not have perceived before, and which stimulate his imagination to discover others of the kind. It elicits and develops certain aspects, and so enables him to form a more truthful conception of the whole. It also disregards other more limited ones which ordinarily might force themselves upon him and distract his attention from the

larger issues. But a creation of this order cannot as a rule be the result of accident or facile talent, or even merely of imagination. As the achievement is largely dependent upon wide and technical knowledge, it must have been the outcome of laborious study and patience inexhaustible. It is this evidence of exact and profound knowledge and infinite pains that characterises Leonardo's work. He has left, for instance, enough in the Royal Library at Windsor and the Venice Academy and elsewhere to show that he was continually engaged upon anatomical and kindred studies, and he probably knew as much about the human body as any man of his time.

It is this unrivalled knowledge of his craft that is responsible for the enigmatic character of some of his faces. How often is the human face in life a puzzle to the onlooker. The eyes and mouth are the features that chiefly betray the personality. But the former apart from their lids are largely beyond control, and being set in sockets with no bony background of their own are not obliged like the mouth to stretch or contract themselves over the hard and irregular fabric of the face. Their expression in fact is their own, and they are the windows of the changeless soul. The mouth, on the other hand, can never be such an interpreter. It is underlaid by the osseous casement of the jaws and teeth, and in contracting or expanding and assuming its various shapes and expressions must always take account of its stubborn substructure. Its expression therefore cannot in the same way as that of the eyes be its own. In old age the eyes may flash as in the days of youth and still be the windows of the eternal spirit, but when the teeth are gone the lips cave in in one direction, and yet are drawn over intractable surfaces in another, and the smile becomes a grin. There is thus always a contradiction and struggle in progress between the soft vehicle of expression and the unmalleable bone, but only the very greatest artists are sufficiently equipped to be able to reveal it.

It is in this warring union of the more permanent with the merely transitory that Leonardo is so transcendent a master. It pervades all his work, and therein lies the enigma that we seem to be confronted with in some of his faces. It is the more enduring skeleton, the reminder of death, of what we all must some day come to, clothed for the moment in its perishable charm which cannot, however, get full play for its expression, that produces this impression of underlying meaning. And through it all, to heighten the mystery, the indestructible spirit gazes out, imprisoned for a while within those painted walls of death, but some day to be set free.

A DOG DIALOGUE.

COME, Brother Bob, let us confer
 On matters that concern us two :
 (No ; not those bones you disinter—
 I do *not* want a closer view)—

But Life and Death, and Love and Hate,
 And what's behind and what's to come ;
 Of the capricious ways of Fate ;
 Of rules of heart and rules of thumb :

Why I am I and you are you,
 And which of us is better worth ;
 Why grass is green, and skies are blue,
 And rainbows never come to earth :

Why right is right, and wrong is wrong,
 And sometimes, also, which is which ;
 And how the purest snows prolong
 Their variations down to pitch ;

Of random kicks, and whence they come ;
 Of empty plates, and how they taste ;
 Of times to bark, times to be dumb ;
 Of rabbits that must not be chased ;

Of doors that shut, and open not ;
 Of doors that open all too soon ;
 Of things that may perhaps be got
 By nightly homage to the moon :

Of burglars and of "casuals,"
 And ways of knowing who is who :
 Of those who're "fond of animals,"
 And others who are fond of *you*.

Of mind and conscience, and the voice
Of Nature (though she's mostly dumb) ;
Whether it makes a kindly noise,
Or just a giant's fee-faw-fum :

If you are a pre-destined dog,
Foreseen in the Eternal Will,
And even this little dialogue
Prescribed upon your little bill :

Or nothing but the latest link
In the great chain of Cause and Cause,
Implicit in some fiery kink
Of the first nebula that was :

If we're immortal or we're not ;
And what on earth we're doing here ;
And if it counts a single jot
Whether we strive or hope or fear :

And then, concerning Duty, what's
The ultimate analysis :
Are you more use in catching rats,
Or I, in writing stuff like this ?

(' A little lower '—thereabout
I rank in the angelic scale,
But how much virtue cancels out
If the possessor has a tail ?)

And many other things like that—
But why prolong the colloquy ?
I've not a single answer pat,
And you know just as much as I.

ROBERT BELL.

WASHED OVERBOARD AT NIGHT IN A GALE.

I SERVED my apprenticeship in the *Wylo*, a China clipper, one of the 'creations' of Steel of Greenock. Therefore she could sail. On one of her passages from London to Foochow, she was passed eight times by the *Cutty Sark*. It makes one wonder which was the better ship.

In 1883 we loaded sugar and hemp in Manila for San Francisco. I was then third mate. The second mate was Kitcat, who later was a P. & O. captain. He was some time in the *Isis* or the *Osiris*, running the ferry between Brindisi and Port Said.

In the height of the N.E. monsoon we sailed to pass through the Balintang Channel. For the first twenty-four hours or so we crept slowly up the coast before light southerly airs. Then in the middle watch the wind came from the northward and she was braced up on the starboard tack.

The wind quickly increased and the mate's watch had the royals and light staysails and outer jib off her by 4 A.M., when we came on deck, I being in the second mate's watch.

We took in some more staysails, and then the two top-gallant sails. By then the wind had increased almost to a gale, and she had run out into a tremendous northerly sea. The wind having increased so rapidly, she had a great deal too much sail on her, and deep loaded as she was with the sugar, she was pitching violently and filling the decks as we came down from stowing the top-gallant sails about 5 A.M. and quite dark.

The inner jib burst and must be immediately hauled down or it would blow to pieces. The second mate recognised that it would take a lot of hauling down unless she were kept away, but the skipper, being a China clipper man, never allowed her to be kept away to take in a sail; however, as he had not yet come on deck, the second mate very properly chanced disobeying a general order and gave her a good wipe off, and down came the jib with a rattle. I was right forward on the down-haul, and next to me was an A.B. by name Wells. As soon as the down-haul was belayed we both jumped out on to the inner boom to make the sail fast. We were told afterwards that as the second mate went aft he sang out: 'Look out, I am going to bring her to.' But we did not hear.

We quickly gathered up the sail and were passing the gaskets. I was riding on the sail with the long head gasket in a coil in my right hand, and my arms round the sail, in such a position that I could hold on so tight that I might have held the weight of about six men hanging on my legs.

Then she took the most terrible dive; the second mate had brought her to with a whang, going about 15 knots. The carpenter, who had been in her about fourteen years—that is, from the time she was launched—told me she went in right up to the foremast, and he had never known her take such a terrible dive, even in her racing days. Wells, who was with me, could not swim a stroke; had he been washed away he would have been drowned at once; however, he was so mixed up in slack gear, weather jib sheets and loose bolt-rope of the burst jib, etc., that the sea could not carry him away; but he was so badly injured that it took him a fortnight in his bunk to recover.

In spite of my powerful hold on the head of the sail the sea forced me off, and away I went, clinging desperately to my gasket, which dragged out of my hand, flake by flake, until I held only the bare end.

Could I go on holding on? But what should I hold on for? Instinct made me try; and by a wonderful chance instinct was right.

Then she had risen in the tremendous sea, and as I held on to my bare end there she was, towering apparently miles and miles above me, and at the next dive she would smash right down on me, and that would be the end.

She smashed down, and the next thing was I was abreast of the weather main rigging, unhurt; and she tearing away from me at the rate of 15 knots.

I was full of salt water, oh! so full, from having swallowed gallons in the smother of foam I had come through. But I had no time to think of that; I had to swim, and swim my very best.

This is what had happened: as she was coming to under lee helm, the sea which washed me away had carried me towards the lee bow; as she rose and left me hanging in the air on the end of my gasket, I had swung to windward under the bowsprit and jib-boom, and had been able to hang on the precise fraction of a second necessary to drop me to windward, so that as she smashed down on me I came up probably between the bowsprit and the jib-boom guys, missing the bowsprit, the jib-boom, the head rail,

the cat head, the whisker, the back ropes, the martingale, the bowsprit shrouds, the jib sheet pennants with their murderous blocks, and any other of the wood and iron, any of which, in that awful dive, would have killed me. In the few seconds in the tremendous smother of foam, and in the dark, I could not see what was missing me.

As I floated past the poop I heard the old man sing out 'Look out—I am throwing you a life-buoy.' The buoys were painted white, and I knew that as they were secured to the rail by three twine seizings, it would be some moments before a knife could be got out, the seizings cut in the dark, and a buoy dropped; and those moments, with her going 15 knots, would mean a long, long way to swim in that awful sea; and then to find the buoy in the dark, if I ever should find it.

However, swim my best I must. Being in the tropics I had on no boots or cap, but only an old patched flannel shirt and old patched serge trousers. I soon felt that the shirt was chafing me under the arms, and the trousers were chafing me behind the knees. I must get out of them or they will drown me. But then I thought, 'If I ever get back on board again, which I doubt, I shall be sorry I have lost them.' So I kept them on and took them back on board, and was glad of them, though they were patched—by myself.

I was swimming valiantly, and could follow for a time in her foaming wake, and could also see the ship through the darkness going away, and away, and away from me. I felt that in that sea I could not swim very long, and I hoped for the buoy. Suddenly I saw it close to on my starboard bow and made an excited dash for it. It was only the white top of a sea.

I swam on. Then suddenly the buoy close to on my port bow. Again an excited dash. Again only the white top of a sea. I don't remember how many seas I dashed for, but at last I got the buoy. I tipped it over my head and rove my two arms up through it.

Then I had time and leisure to think, and I vomited violently the salt water that I had swallowed in the smother of foam under the bow. Until I got the buoy I was much too busy keeping afloat to think of the salt water I had swallowed.

Then I set myself to yell, to let them know where I was. I never yelled so hard or so long in my life. I never stopped. Instinct again. Of course they never heard me, but it made a form of occupation for me.

The ship was still leaving me, and there seemed no chance of

her picking me up ; but I must not give in. In the midst of my yelling I began to consider what to do. I knew that there was a weekly mail boat between Hong Kong and Manila, but I had no idea on what day of the week. Should I wait for the chance of being picked up by her, or should I start to try to swim back forty miles to Manila in this gale of wind in my life-buoy ?

Then day began to break, and in due course the sun rose. I saw they had wore ship, and she was at last sailing back to me, but apparently a long way to leeward. Would they see me ? I still yelled to let them know where I was. They took no notice because they never heard.

Then they hove her to on the starboard tack about three quarters of a mile to leeward of me. There was a boat in the port quarter davits, so I knew I should see her pulling either round the bow or round the stern. I watched eagerly, but no boat ; I waited and watched, and still no boat.

Then, ugh ! Horrors ! A shark close to me. This was worse than drowning. But no ; it was only the loose sleeve of my shirt. I was told afterwards that sharks do not come to the surface in a gale, but that was no consolation to me when I thought I saw one about to attack me.

But still no boat. What could have happened ? Surely they must have been unable to get her away in this awful weather, and after all they must go away and leave me.

Meanwhile what had been going on on board from the time I went overboard ? She was under such a tremendous press of canvas in the sudden gale and heavy sea that for a time they could do nothing with her ; she was practically under water, the decks being flooded. The running gear, which in the previous fine weather had not been hung up on the pins, was washing all over the decks ; some of it had jammed under some of the spare spars which had lifted slightly, and it was almost hopelessly mixed up. So it was with the greatest difficulty they were able to get her shortened down, and this in the dark. The foresail blew away, which helped to ease her.

When they did get her shortened down and the head braces and other running gear cleared, she was wore round and sailed back, it being by then daylight.

When they got her back to about the place where the old man thought I must have gone overboard, she was hove to on the starboard tack and all hands were sent aloft to look out for me.

After a time an A.B., a Dutchman, said he saw me on the weather beam ; no one else had seen me. All hands were sent down from aloft to get the boat away ; only the mate being left in the mizzen cross-trees to keep me in sight with his binoculars, and to direct the boat how to steer.

The weather was so bad that the boat could not be ordered away ; they had to call for a volunteer crew, which consisted of the second mate at the helm, the stout Jersey bosun, Phillips, at stroke, and three A.B.'s. No. 2 and No. 3 were the two best A.B.'s in the ship. The little man at the bow oar had been in the Navy and was a very poor sailorman. In those days we considered that any man who left the Navy to join a merchant ship was no good ; and it was certainly so in this case. He was a nice amiable little man, however, whom everybody liked, though no use as a sailor. But he could pull an oar, and when this nasty, dangerous bit of boat work had to be done, there he was, God bless him !

The boat got safely away, with orders from the old man to 'pull in the direction of the sun,' which was about abeam. Of course he had not seen me, and only went by what the Dutchman vaguely said he had seen.

As soon as the boat was clear of the ship and pulling 'in the direction of the sun,' the mate in the mizzen cross-trees with his binoculars sang out that he saw me right astern, that I was not on the starboard beam at all. Then all hands shouted and waved to the boat to pull astern of the ship, but in the boat they were too busy handling her in the heavy sea to hear or see the signalling from the ship. They went on pulling 'in the direction of the sun.'

Meanwhile I in my buoy was keeping up my frantic shouting to let them know where I was, which they never heard. I still saw no boat, so I knew then they had been unable to get her away. I really don't know what my thoughts were.

Then, suddenly, there was the glorious boat almost over my head on the top of a huge sea ; as she came down to me on the back of the sea I seized the bow oar with my left hand and the gunwale with my right, and I was saved ; and that was the first those in the boat knew of me.

They had rowed about three-quarters of a mile in a terrific head sea 'in the direction of the sun,' and had come straight to me ; not straight enough to hit me, only straight enough to put the gunwale in my right hand and the bow oar in my left.

Of course the mate had seen nothing astern. If those in the

boat had seen the waving or had heard the shouting on board, that would have been the last of me.

As bow and No. 2 hauled me into the boat I crooked up my legs so as to drag my faithful life-buoy in with me, and I lay down on the bottom of the boat.

Then it was beautiful to hear the fat bosun telling the second mate what to do in coaxing the boat round before the wind and sea, which was done without shipping a drop. The second mate, being a deep-water man, probably did not know very much about handling a boat in a heavy sea; but the stout Jersey bosun had been a fisherman, and he knew.

They got me back on board about 6.30 A.M., so I had been about an hour and a quarter in the water. I was very glad to go to my bunk and have a long rest, but I don't think I slept much. At noon it was my watch on deck again. We bent a new foresail and I hauled out the lee earing; Wells was lying injured in his bunk.

A very wonderful part of this experience was those in the boat never seeing me, and my not seeing the boat until she was on top of me. It is evident that the reason for this was the extraordinary chance that, throughout that three-quarters of a mile row to windward, each time I was on the top of a sea and visible, the boat was down in a trough so could not see me, and each time the boat was on top of a sea and visible, I was down in a trough and therefore could not see her, though I had the sun at my back, and the white boat was lighted up by it.

Not long ago I met in London Captain Walter Saunders, R.N., and we had lunch together. He served as apprentice in the same firm as I did; we had never met before, though I had often heard of him. I told him how I was washed overboard. Then he told me a wonderful experience he had when he was a little apprentice boy of fourteen; this might be about 1876.

He was in a ship called the *Agnes Muir*; she was lying at anchor at Woosung, eighteen miles below Shanghai. He knew an officer on board the P. & O. *Lombardy*, which was lying at Shanghai; so he went on board and spent the evening with his friend. At 10 P.M. the officers got him a sampan to go down to his ship at Woosung, but before he started they gave him a good half glass of neat gin. This to a youngster of fourteen! He managed to get into the sampan, and that was the last he knew until he woke the next day in his bunk on board his ship at Woosung. He had no

idea how he got there, and on inquiring he learned that at 2 A.M. the night watchman went down the accommodation ladder to draw a bucket of water; as he got to the grating at the foot of the ladder he saw something floating by in the tide; he put out his hand and seized it and found it was a boy, alive but unconscious, Saunders.

His pockets had been rifled, but he was unhurt. Evidently the sampan men, after looting him, had thrown him overboard. This was not unusual in China in those days.

Thus he had floated down all those eighteen miles in four hours, unconscious but right way up, and was carried right alongside the ladder of his ship, and the watchman was there at the exact second of time. If he had been a foot farther from the ladder the watchman could not have reached him, nor could he have done so if he had been two feet nearer the ship because he would have passed under the grating.

J. G. E. METCALFE.

FATE AND THE BARBER.

BY JOHN HASLETTE VAHEY.

I AM, I suppose, the only European who helped Don Alessandro Jiminez to become the saviour of his country. Everyone knows that he sprang at a bound from the position of fashionable *posticheur* of San Mayo to the Presidency of that happy country. Few know that he had originally no ideas of becoming President, or of saving anyone, or anything more important than the clipped tresses of shingled señoritas; which proves that Fate and the *posticheur* are still associated, even since Delilah's day.

It used to be said that San Mayo did not indulge in revolutions. That was true, but hardly creditable to San Mayo. It arose from the fact that old Don Arturo Zanas promptly executed anyone foolish enough to suggest a cleaning of the Augean stables, in which he, as President, had a vested interest. Heads are better than head-lines was the motto of the local journalists; and a whole skin is better than half a pound of lead.

At the time when I went out to the capital, to take up the post of manager to the San Mayon Shipping Syndicate, the principle that everything you bought had to be paid for was well established in the republic. Don Arturo was thoroughly democratic. You could see him personally at any time, if you took a note with you. The larger the note, the bigger your welcome. If you wanted anything, you went to him. If you wanted anything, and did not go to him, you heard from him.

Warned in time, and wise in my generation, I always went to him, and had a hearty welcome.

He was a man like a bull, and he had as thick a hide. There was no need to palm the note you carried, and linger over the business of shaking hands with His Excellency. You put it on a corner of his table, and kept your hand on it until your interview was concluded. Then Don Arturo placed his hand on it, and you went away.

Briefly, corruption was rampant, bribery the custom; and even thievery, excusable homicide, and discreet abduction could be smoothed over with a conciliatory note.

I had been there a year, and was sitting one day in my hot

office by the river bank, when Don Alessandro breezed in. I had always liked this dapper little man, with his Italianate face, his quick movements, his sympathetic smile, and his capacity for cutting my unruly hair so as not to disguise the fact that I was still a British subject.

He spoke excellent English, and as he sat down, and politely raided my cigarette-box, he apologised for his intrusion, and said that he had merely come to impart to me a little local gossip of an entertaining kind.

I was making up for my firm a list of money given to His Excellency the President during the past financial year, and gladly sat back to listen.

'It appears, Don John,' he began, inhaling with enjoyment, 'that we are to become a second Hollywood.'

I laughed. 'Are you serious, Don Alessandro?'

'E vero,' replied my friend. 'This morning I was attending to the beautiful hair of His Excellency's Sultana, and she told me of it. Now, it seemed to me that here was business for your estimable firm. Steamers will be needed for the sea-fight, and I am aware that one of yours is laid up at the moment. No doubt you could put the fact before Don Arturo in good time.'

I thanked him, and consulted my balance—the amount still left of my official 'Entertainment Fund.' I could just do it.

'Who is going to do this evil thing?' I asked.

He smiled subtly. 'Yesterday, as you are no doubt aware, Mr. Hyam G. Harter arrived on a visit—for his health. The fact is that he is anxious to make a big picture here. He was to have made it in Mexico, but the Mexicans are rather tired of revolutions, and it might also lead to political complications. It is to be a picture showing how his great country saves all the other countries from ruin, and the Californian hero puts down with one hand a dreadful revolution. To have a revolution, you must have two sides.'

'There are no two sides here,' I objected. 'Don Arturo is both sides, and top and bottom as well!'

'No doubt. But Mr. Harter dined with him last night, and the thing is to be done. The only question is, Is Mr. Harter to do it?'

I was surprised. 'Who else, if he arranged it?'

Don Alessandro took another cigarette. 'Since Hyam G. Harter came here for his health, his great rival in the cinemato-

graphic industry also decided to come here. He arrived this morning, and promptly went up to see His Excellency. What is arranged can be rearranged. But it will not matter to you which of these magnates makes the higher bid. See His Excellency at once, and get the contract for the steamers. The plot requires a combat on shipboard, where the athletic hero can show off his agility. That in addition, of course, to fighting in the streets, and a number of men on horses chasing each other on the plains outside the town, and firing off revolvers. Now I must go. I have to arrange the hair of Don Hyam's daughter, a pretty American. I may hear more from her.'

I thanked him for his hint, implemented my thanks in a more telling way, and went out to see His Excellency. We were very good friends at that time, and I had no difficulty in getting him to promise me the contract I desired. He was surprised that I had heard of the scheme, but did not hesitate to tell me privately that the *Americano del Norte*, who had called that day, had been very generous indeed. He had contributed more to local charities (unnamed) than Mr. Harter. Mr. Harter, appealed to over the telephone to come across with further philanthropy, had refused. So it had been decided that the ultra-benevolent Mr. Harris Firth Garway got the business.

All this was kept very dark in San Mayo. One lady knew of it, and Don Alessandro had it from her, and passed it on to me. But the details had been thrashed out between the principals, and everything settled before the greater public got wind of it.

It was arranged that two armies should be made of the State forces, aided by supers capable of firing revolvers and riding horses, but the idea of having street-fighting had been quashed on economic grounds. It would have involved the smashing of glass, and in San Mayo even the soldiery could not hear a window go without leaping inside to see what damage had been done. And a great deal of damage can be done by an ill-paid soldier, with the instincts of a collector, who gets into a shop. In place of that, it was agreed that all the powder should be expended in the plain outside the town, to be followed by a mass attack on the Californian hero. The hero, flying to the bay, and keeping there a few hundred armed men, would seize a steamer single-handed, and proceed to wipe the decks with the armed crew. Afterwards he was to take the capital, rescue the heroine, and, if he was by then not out of breath, place the heroine on the seat of power.

This was admittedly an excellent programme, and I was busy for some days preparing our steamer for the fray. I was sitting on a bollard one morning early, watching my men working, when a slim young girl came up to me, and smiled.

'Buenas dias, señor,' she greeted me.

'Yes, it *is* fine,' I replied, charmed by her smile, and even more so by the dimpled, merry little face. 'Miss Harter, isn't it?'

She nodded. 'How did you know? You're British, aren't you.'

'Absolutely,' I replied. 'I'm busy making a warship.'

She frowned. 'If you think Harris Garway is going to make any picture, you got it wrong,' she told me. 'There's still kids of five remember when he slunk into Hollywood, and whooped for joy getting a part as a pie-stopper in slapstick. You wait and see!'

I had seen Mr. Harris Firth Garway, and I did not like him. I had to work in with him over the steamer stunt, and he put my back up by asking me if I knew the fo'castle from the poop. As the steamer had no poop, the question was unnecessary and offensive, but quite in keeping with the bullying sort of fellow Garway was.

I did not like him, but I very definitely did like Miss Mary Harter. As Mr. Garway was away at the other side of the town, making his arrangements for the placing of his camera-men at the location of the main battle, I took her over the ship, and explained to her briefly the stirring events that were to take place on her decks.

'Well, if that hasn't been done till it's charred!' she cried in disgust. 'Doug. and water—that's what it is!'

Before she said good-bye to me, she made me promise to look up her father at his hotel that evening, and left me as much impressed by her charm as her beauty.

The next bit of news came to me again from Don Alessandro. He was convulsed by it, and so, I admit, was I, though I ought to have known old Arturo well enough by that time to have understood what he was likely to do, with two American magnates in the capital.

Failing to secure a further contribution to charity from Mr. Harter, Don Arturo had reflected that some measure of consideration was due to the first arrival. He swore that gentleman to secrecy, and promised that he would have a chance to 'shoot'

a revolution for the sum first agreed upon. When Mr. Harter replied drily that a picture was most valuable being exclusive, Don Arturo winked.

According to him, if not according to the truth, the plain selected for the battle of Harris Garway did not belong to the State, but to a wealthy landowner, at present absent from the capital, who would strongly object on his return to any horseman cavorting on his ground, or sully the air of his plain with the smoke of powder.

'That will not be my fault, as the señor sees,' the old rogue had added. 'I have only contracted to supply the armies, and I have already received a sum down!'

So it was decided that the landowner should receive anonymous warning of the contemplated proceedings in time to issue a *caveat* on the morning of the battle. On that same day Mr. Harter would be allowed to stage his show in the hilly and scrubby country, five miles outside the town to the north. Mr. Hyam Harter, incensed by the activities of his rival, agreed, and a contract was drawn up. Then the cinema magnate withdrew to his hotel, to make some necessary changes in the scenario of his story.

'But Don Arturo contracted to supply the armies,' I objected, when Don Alessandro paused, chuckling.

'He will make two into four, as is his custom,' he replied.

'They may refuse to pay,' I said.

'They will be detained if they do,' said he. 'Don Arturo is a cunning beast, and gets his own way, as you know.'

I called on Mr. Harter, and found him very agreeable. Mary had talked of me; very flatteringly, it seemed. We had a pleasant evening together, and, though I could not promise to dish Mr. Garway by scuttling the steamer, or anything of that kind, I assured Harter that my sympathies were all on his side.

On the following morning, and with the greatest secrecy, he was taking his producer, his camera-men, and his subordinates out to survey the hilly location the President had promised him.

Meanwhile, it had become known that Mr. Harris Garway was to 'shoot' pictures of a battle on the plain outside the town. He had no objection to spectators watching the mimic combat, and old Arturo accordingly had a brain-wave, and ordered a friend of his to rope off an enclosure, for which tickets could be had at from one to five dollars.

As he had not told Mr. Garway of the apocryphal owner of

the plain, and his hypothetical objections, the magnate did not object.

'What an old scoundrel he is!' said Don Alessandro to me, when he brought me this private and confidential bit of news. 'If one had the courage, eh?'

'To replace him with an honest man,' I said. 'It would be a saving to my company, *amigo*.'

Alessandro seemed to brood over that. 'Would you say that there was such a one in San Mayo, Don John?' he asked.

'Unless you care to claim the job,' I suggested.

'Ah!' said Alessandro.

But he was absent-minded for the rest of that day, and I have wondered since if I was a good judge, or an adept flatterer.

Mr. Hyam Harter had secretly transported all his entourage out of town on the night before the battle, nominally to shoot in the foot-hills. The town itself was full of martial sounds, for the whole of the republican army had arrived in the capital. Also, said the shopkeepers, a great many things vanished from it during the dark hours. When the soldiers come to San Mayo, the shops shut. Possibly the traders give up business temporarily so that they may welcome their professional defenders. But I may be mistaken in thinking so.

So as not to excite suspicion, Miss Mary Harter remained in town. So did I. As a matter of fact, it seemed a good opportunity to take her round the capital, now denuded of most of its citizens, and have lunch together at the Casa Bracio, which was generally overcrowded.

'I guess this will make Garway feel like a boiled owl,' said Mary, as a troop of Federal cavalry whirled past the hotel. 'All dressed up and nowhere to go, that lot!'

I did not enlighten her. I had had the news in confidence, and I dare not chance letting Don Arturo know that I had interfered with his shearing operations.

'The President is not going there after all,' I told her. 'He told Garway he was not feeling well.'

'I suppose you're not sweet on one of the maids-of-honour, are you?' she asked, laughing. 'You're sure first with the news.'

'I get it from my barber, who is also *posticheur* to His Excellency,' I told her. 'Don Alessandro goes up there this afternoon to attend to our local Samson.'

'Some strong man, Art.,' she commented. 'Is he popular?'

'As a woodpecker in an ants' nest,' I said. 'Let's get on to lunch. They cook *tortillas* there that will make you forswear all other forms of nourishment.'

We were sitting in the café, taking our coffee, and smoking cigarettes together, when the first sound of gunfire broke on our ears.

'Pop getting busy,' said Mary, with a smile.

'Sounds like it,' I remarked equivocally, aware that the sounds came from the plain.

The intermittent noises continued. After a few minutes there came a dull sound of musketry from the foot-hills.

'Going some!' said Mary beatifically.

'Should make a good picture,' I admitted.

We smoked and chatted for half an hour, and the battles appeared to be still going strong.

The next thing we saw was Harris Firth Garway's hero. He came down the Avenida, spurring like mad, saw us sitting in the café, pulled his foaming horse up on his haunches, in the best cow-boy style, and rushed up to our table, after a descent from the steed that drew from me an involuntary round of applause.

I concluded at once that the producer must be one of those moderns with an excessive craving for realism. The hero had half his clothes torn off, some blood on the side of his neck, and an expression that registered fear so effectually that even his rival's daughter had to clap.

'Hide me! They're after me!' he cried.

Mary laughed. 'Say, the camera-men aren't up yet. Register that and hold it! It's great!'

'Camera-men be darned!' he shouted. 'The whole boiling's got excited, and the ambulances busy. There's a dog-fight up there, and then some.'

I jumped up. The man was in earnest. The unsophisticated soldiery had taken fiction for reality, and were fighting it out on the plain. I did not dare to suggest to Mary that her father's military supers might also have taken to scrapping in dead earnest, though the sounds of firing from that quarter swelled momentarily, and I was not at all easy in my mind about it.

'Here! Cut into the proprietor's office, and mention my name. Tell him to hide you in the *patio* behind,' I told the wild-eyed hero.

He bolted inside like a rabbit. I ran down to the street, and

smacked his horse on the quarters. It bolted, and I returned to Mary, trying to look as if I did that sort of thing every day.

'Look here,' I said, forcing a smile. 'Obviously something has gone wrong up there. Though that chap is too frightened to be depended on, I think it would be wiser if I saw you back to your hotel. The soldiers here are rather a wild lot.'

Mary pursed her pretty lips. 'Then I'd better go along to see if anything's happened to Pop.'

I was going to say that she was not to do anything of the kind, when from the other side of the Avenida I saw the forerunners of Hyam Harter's rout.

There were two camera-men. The unfailing instinct which makes a photographer preserve his camera at all costs had led them to bring their treasures with them. The legs dangled on the horses' flanks, spurring those animals to fresh exertions. The men themselves were helping to that desirable end. They went by in a cloud of dust, and Mary and I stood transfixed, staring after them.

'They must be fighting too,' said Mary. 'But where's Pop?'

I glanced that way up the Avenida, and pointed him out. Good living and a full habit had not made him a graceful horseman. But he was sticking like a fat limpet to the neck of his mount, as it came pelting down the street.

I did not hesitate. I jumped from the terrace of the café, sprang into the middle of the road, and held up my hands, shouting. The horse sprang straight up, tipped Mr. Harter over his tail, slipped on the asphalt paving, and rolled over, kicking wildly. I dashed in, removed Mr. Harter from the menace of a lashing hoof, and put him on his feet.

'What's happened?' I asked.

'All hell's happened!' he cried, with an almost excusable profanity. 'Those dagoes are firing ball, and they're making the Somme look like a sham fight.'

I brought him to Mary. While she was folded in his arms, I told them both that the hotel was their best refuge. A victoria plying for hire was passing the café. I hailed the driver, bundled them both in, and gave the name of the hotel. Then I stood on the pavement, and tried to get the sense of things.

Knowing the fiery pugnacity and unthinking bellicosity of the San Mayon soldier, I was not surprised at what had happened. Even in our own army manœuvres individual soldiers have been

known to forget the mimic character of the operations, and evince a desire to charge the other side with the bayonet. At the same time, I did not want the infuriated guerillas to finish their performance by advancing on the capital.

A policeman farther down the Avenida had noticed the fugitives, and came up to me.

'Señor, are these Americanos del Norte gone mad?' he asked.

I had an inspiration. 'Mad?' I said indignantly. 'Do you not know that a revolution has broken out? The garrison from Punto Gordo is advancing over the foot-hills, while the loyal troops are still playing at soldiers on the plain.'

He gasped. Then he ran up the Avenida, towards the house of the Jefe Politico. I heard afterwards that the Jefe had taken to horse, spurred madly out to the plain, and, collecting what soldiers were left, led them to the attack on the 'revolutionaries' in the foot-hills. At any rate, an hour later, the firing up there redoubled rather than slackened, and the more timid people who had remained in town began to put up shutters, and lock and bar their doors.

The policeman had hardly gone, when I saw Don Alessandro coming towards me, as dapper and alert and composed as usual. He was carrying in his hand the little bag which held his shaving tackle and materials for shampooing His Excellency Don Arturo.

Upon him I fastened at once. I told him what had happened, pictured graphically the terrified flight of the American fugitives, and asked him what he thought ought to be done.

He started when I told him, and then reflected.

'Señor,' he said, looking at me with a new pride and dignity in his eye, 'there is only one thing to be done. Our country suffers under a tyrant—'

'Yours,' said I diplomatically.

But by now he was too excited to heed. 'Whoever removes the tyrant who has battered on our liberties,' he continued, warming up in the best revolutionary style, 'he will deserve well of the State. To-day the tyrant's minions are out of the city. Not all of them will return, and of those the majority have not been paid. I know you to be a brave man, Don John—'

'No, no!' I said prudently. 'Not a bit of it. Don't exaggerate!'

'I know you to be brave,' he continued firmly. 'The hour has come, and I am the man! Go in here, and ask Señor Melillo

for a strong rope. Come with me to the palace, and see the sun of liberty arise !'

'But I thought you were going up to shampoo His Excellency ?' I said.

'I am going to cut Samson's hair, and draw the tyrant's teeth !' he said ferociously. 'Get the rope and come.'

I reflected. After all, there was something in it. The soldiers were away, and disaffected at that. One might pull off a *coup d'état* which would at once deprive San Mayo of a tyrant and me of an official leech.

'Viva la Libertad !' I said, raising my hat solemnly. Then I went in to borrow a rope—and a gun—from the estimable Señor Melillo, and together we set out for the President's residence.

A few servants only remained there. They knew the barber, and they knew me. We were admitted, and I was put in the ante-room, while Don Alessandro took his bag of tools and went into His Excellency's bedroom. On the way over we had concerted a plan. I was to remain in the ante-room for fifteen minutes exactly. We synchronised our watches before we parted. At the end of that time I was to make my way to the President's room and aid Don Alessandro to put Samson in bonds. Sitting in the ante-room, with a gun in my pocket, and a coil of rope wound round my body, I felt singularly un-English. But there were compensations even in that. As a child I had hankered to be a pirate. This day, as the psycho-analysts might say, I was going to be released from my inhibitions.

And it was rather a jolly thought, and a profitable one, that at last San Mayo was to see an honest man in power. In that, of course, I mistook the mentality of the San Mayon, and of Alessandro in particular. Corruption, I suppose, is infectious. Don Alessandro, later on, took it badly.

I sat watching my time anxiously, strung up for the zero hour. The palace was very quiet. The minutes dragged. Now Alessandro had finished shaving His Excellency ; now he was washing him with a hot cloth, and powdering his expansive chin ; now he was swathing his head in hot towels, preparing to shampoo him. Now—— !

I got up, unwound the rope, and tiptoed out of the ante-room. I knew my way about the place, and soon I was turning cautiously the handle of His Excellency's bedroom door. It opened, and I slipped in.

Alessandro was there, and Don Arturo, and a cloud of steam. I saw Alessandro give a quick backward glance at me, and nod. I saw Don Arturo's huge head made still more huge by a monstrous lather. Then, as I watched, I saw the barber put his hands gently but firmly on the bull neck, and force the head and face of his patient into the basin of hot water in front of him.

'Pronto!' said Don Alessandro.

There was a grunting, and a splashing, and a spluttering, as I rushed on His Excellency and did my work. Alessandro, calm as Fate, held his head under water, I tied his legs and his hands, and then fastened the rest of the rope round his middle.

Released, Don Arturo emerged choking from the lather. Alessandro, with the speed of light, thrust a shaving brush in his face, filling his eyes again, and impeding his speech. Then, with me, he tailed on to the rope, and dashed for the door.

Don Arturo never had a chance. We took him like a roped steer down the main stairway, and out into the sunlight. We stopped a passing carriage at the point of a gun, and hoisted His Excellency inside. Then we mounted beside him, and drove off down the Avenida de dos de Mayo, with a gathering crowd running by our side and cheering madly.

The muzzle of a gun conveniently held in his ribs kept Don Arturo quiet now. He sat there, covered with soap and dejection. The cheering crowd became a laughing crowd. When we had reached the statue of the first Liberator of San Mayo in the Plaza we stopped, surrounded by a roar of the wildest hilarity.

Don Alessandro got up, and took off his hat. 'Behold the man who took away your liberties!' he cried. 'Amigos, I have conquered him with soap! What is your will? To prison or the palace?'

'Let the prison barber finish him,' shouted a voice. 'To prison!'

'Lather him well!' cried another.

'Here is a convenient fountain to remove the soap!' shouted a third.

The crowd closed in. Don Arturo was taken from us, and ducked three times in the fountain. Then he was set up in the carriage again, and the cortège moved off in the direction of the *calabozo*.

I did not go with them. Edging into the crowd, I made my way to the Miramar Hotel, and joined Mr. Hyam Harter and Mary.

As I have said, San Mayo is democratic. Don Arturo had been a butcher before he became a President, and the *posticheur* was socially no worse. When the remnants of the soldiery returned to the town that evening, they were met by Alessandro with a month's pay from the National Mint, and the announcement that he had been elected President by universal acclamation. In San Mayo the man who pays anyone is a hero.

That, in brief, is the story of my share in the saving of San Mayo. That Don Alessandro is no longer an honest man; that I married Mary Harter, and am now business manager for the World-Wide Picture Co.; that the present manager of the San Mayon Shipping Syndicate has to pay tribute to the President, even as I had—those are details which may be found one day in the history of that corrupt republic, but do not belong to the present story.

To those who may deem this narrative in any degree unveracious, I can only suggest that they should go out to San Mayo, and consult the country's archives. They will find it all there!

THE QUEST FOR WORK.

BY W. F. WATSON.

THERE appears to be an impression in the minds of the younger generation that the unemployed problem is something peculiar to the present epoch. Reading in the Press startling headlines about the 'Alarming Growth of Unemployed Figures,' 'Hard Winter Ahead,' 'Grave Problem of Unemployment,' and such like, optimistic youth is apt to say 'Ah, yes! That's the aftermath of the great World War; trade will soon be brisk again, and then things will adjust themselves.' But those of us who have reached middle age, and can cast our minds back a quarter of a century and more, know that there is nothing new about the problem: it is a legacy which has been handed down to posterity by generation after generation; like a recurring decimal it goes on and on. There is a difference, however. Ever since we have had a system of industrialism, trade has always moved in cycles. There would be a period of prosperity and good trade, when work would be plentiful, wages comparatively high, and the workshops working at high pressure. During these periods unemployment was reduced to a minimum, and mainly made up of unemployables.

These booms in trade had various origins, but for the most part they can be traced to some invention or discovery which supplied the people with a badly felt want. In the beginning of the industrial era, the production of cotton and the mining of coal made plenty of work. Indeed, there was such a demand for labour that agricultural workers deserted the countryside and flocked into the mills and the mines. Soon afterwards there came a big boom in engineering, following closely upon the application of steam to locomotion. During the latter part of last century the bicycle, phonograph and gramophone, electricity, motor-cars and, later, aeroplanes came along, each in their turn bringing periods of prosperity.

Then would follow a stretch of bad trade—of darkness and depression. Workshops, warehouses, and factories would close down, workpeople would be discharged in thousands, the unemployed would agitate and marches would be organised. The Press would be filled with columns of stories of the sufferings of the destitute (just as they are to-day), and the Government of the day

would be petitioned to do something (again, just as it is to-day). And so things would drag on until trade improved again, and the mass of the workless were absorbed.

By the irony of fate, during the cycles of good trade, the workers themselves have helped to devise the instruments which made the periods of good trade less frequent and shorter. They made the tools, machines, labour-saving devices, and material which increased man's productivity. Our engineers and experts were sent to other countries all over the world, countries which were hitherto customers of Britain, to train the inhabitants to manufacture for themselves, thus making them formidable competitors in the world's markets. As the machine developed, increasing man's productivity, as the world's markets became gradually restricted, so the periods of good trade contracted and the periods of depression expanded. The years immediately prior to the War, it will be remembered, were particularly bad. Between 1914 and 1918, the exigencies of the War demanded unlimited output of engineering products. Machinery and science were applied to production as they had never been before, and individual productivity increased beyond man's dreams. Limitations of overseas transport prevented the exportation of goods, and our customers were compelled more than ever to produce for themselves. Hence, during the past ten years, unemployment has become a permanent feature in our social life. And that is the difference.

In pre-war days it was regarded as quite exceptional for a man, especially an engineer, to be out of work for three months. Such a man, if he were a trade unionist, would probably be summoned before the branch executive to give a satisfactory explanation of his protracted idleness. To-day to be unemployed a whole year is a common experience; there are many instances of men being idle for two, three, and four years (the writer, a skilled mechanic, was without employment for three and a half years), and a recent Press paragraph told of a man who had done no work for nine years! And there appears to be no likelihood of improvement.

Last January the Minister of Labour appointed a Board, comprising Sir Warren Fisher, Sir John Cadman, and Sir David J. Shackleton, to inquire into and report on unemployment. For six months the members of the Board conducted a searching and exhaustive inquiry, at the end of which they issued a report (July 1928), in which they said there would be a permanent surplus of at least 200,000 miners, and probably an increase in the numbers of

unemployed in the basic industries. 'We are under no delusions,' says the report, 'about the necessity for a reorganisation from within of the heavy industries; it is beginning already, and will continue, but it seems clear that, in its first phases, at any rate, reorganisation means concentration of production in the most economic units, and unless this leads to an immediate and substantial expansion of trade through lower prices, a contraction and not an increase of personnel is involved.' As a matter of fact the figures have increased. According to the latest returns there are 1,324,000 workless (324,000 of whom are miners) signing the live register at the Employment Exchanges. Add to this figure the many thousands who for various reasons are not registered, and the grand total of unemployed approximates two millions.

Think of it! Two million potential wealth producers seeking employers! But *do* we think of it? Are we not rather indifferent towards the unemployed! If we read in our favourite newspaper that the unemployed figures jumped up 20,000 last month, or the story of an inquest on a poor devil who was found drowned, or dead with his head in a gas oven—the wife said he had been out of work for many months and was depressed—we are apt to frown with annoyance at being reminded of such unpleasant things. Being ourselves employed, we say 'How terrible!' and quickly turn to the magazine page, the sporting columns, or the feuilleton—according to fancy. There are even some who, with elevated eyebrows, will say 'I cannot understand it. Surely it is impossible to be out of work so long! Work-shies, that's what they are. They could easily get work if they really wanted it.' But the members of the above-mentioned Board do not share that view. 'We are satisfied,' they say, 'that, regarded as a type, the British miner is an example to his fellows.' 'In our visit to these (mining) areas nothing saddened us so much as to see young boys idle and aimless, and fathers of families growing desperate at their inability to bring up their children in decent self-dependence.' The Board went out of its way to comment upon what is described 'as a calumny which has gained some currency' about the unemployed in general. 'A misunderstanding, so obstinate in some quarters as to appear deliberate, of our whole system of unemployment insurance, an attitude summed up in the word "dole," has created an impression that the unemployed are unemployable, that they could easily find work if they wished, but that they prefer to live in idleness on money derived from the State.'

After pointing out that unemployment insurance is a contributory scheme to which workmen contribute, and that no workman can possibly draw benefits unless he satisfies stringent conditions, the report goes on to say: 'Every impartial body that has examined the scheme, notably the Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Blanesburgh which reported in 1927, has found that the allegations of abuse are wholly without foundation. The body of unemployed is not a standing army of vagrants and loafers, but a number of genuine industrial workers whose composition is constantly changing. There are, of course, "work-shies" among them, as there are in every section of society, and in every country, but for the most part the unemployed are, at any time, a fair sample of the whole body of industrial workpeople in this country.'

As one who has experienced the bitterness of the quest for work, who has had to line up at the Employment Exchange and at the Relieving Officer's station, who has on more than one occasion appeared before an Employment Committee, who has also been a member of a Rota Committee adjudicating on claims for benefit, and who is at present a member of a Local Employment Committee, I unhesitatingly endorse every word. But how can one who has never had the experience understand these things!

Last summer the authorities decided that Piccadilly must be thoroughly repaired, and the week-end papers announced that work was to begin on the Monday. An all-night queue of work-seekers assembled on Sunday, and by daybreak the famous thoroughfare was thronged with men drawn from the far North, Lancashire, the Midlands, and Wales. Imagine those men leaving home on Sunday for the long trek to London, hoping against hope that they might get a few weeks' work! Some had pawned or borrowed in order to get the fare together, others had tramped the whole of the distance. Oh, the bitter disappointment when they were told by the contractors that no extra men would be needed! These men, at any rate, were not 'work-shies.'

That there are work-shies cannot be disputed—I have met many. Lads of seventeen or eighteen—some have never worked since they left school; others worked three or four years in a 'blind-alley' occupation, only to be discharged to make room for younger and cheaper boys—have lost all interest in work. Living at home with their parents, they are assured of food and lodging, and they usually 'scrounge' for cigarettes, sweets, and picture money. Some, alas, figure frequently in police courts! Are they individually responsible

for their lamentable condition? Has not the unemployed problem itself made them what they are? Is it not reasonable to assume that, given more favourable circumstances, most of them would have become honest hard-working men, and self-respecting citizens?

Now let us endeavour to trace the descent of a man who has held a fairly good job until middle age, and then suddenly finds himself sacked, through either reorganisation, machinery, or slackness. Meeting his first spell of unemployment, and not knowing what is before him, he is inclined to be optimistic. 'It's all right, my dear,' he cheerfully tells his wife; 'I shall soon get another job. Don't you worry. I hear they are very busy at Brown and Robinson's; I'll pop round there in the morning—I know the foreman. Then there's Frank Wilkins, who works at Jones and Smith's. He told me he would speak for me if ever I fell out of work. It'll only be for a week or so, mate.'

Next morning he toddles off to the Employment Exchange to lodge his claim, and his optimism is slightly damped by the sight of the queues of men with drawn haggard features, and hopeless looks in their eyes. 'Ah!' says he, trying to deceive himself, 'these are the men I've read about—the regulars—the "won't-works."' Thank God, I'm not like them. I shall soon "click." After 'signing on,' he calls at Brown and Robinson's to see his friend the foreman. Over a friendly glass in a neighbouring tavern, the foreman expresses surprise and sorrow at the misfortune of his friend. 'I thought you'd got a job for life, George!' 'So did I,' replies George, 'but work fell off owing to that new machine they have just installed.' 'H'm! It's a bit rotten. We're rather slack just now; several hands were discharged only last week. If things look up, as they may do shortly, I'll put in a good word for you.' The work-seeker shakes off the effects of the first rebuff and goes along to see Frank Wilkins. 'Hullo, George,' says Frank, 'what are you doing at this time of the day? What! Got the sack! After all these years! I'm awfully sorry, old man. But'—hopefully—'things are not *too* bad. It's a funny thing, George, but we started a couple of men last week. No. I'm afraid there's no room for another. Wait here a bit. I'll just pop in and see the "coddly."' He returns five minutes later. 'Sorry, George, but the manager says he can't find room for you at the moment. There may be a chance next week. Give us a look up. Cheerio, old chap. I wish you luck.'

It is very unwise to trust to promises of friends. A man holding

a minor position in a factory likes to create the impression amongst his associates that he is in a position of authority, and is able to use that authority to get jobs for others. These men are a bit of a nuisance. When put to the test it is generally found that they have no influence of any sort.

George arrives home rather down in the mouth ; his first day in the quest for work has been disappointing. He tells the wife that he expects to get fixed up soon, but intuition tells her he is lying. The end of the week found George still out of work. He felt very strange on Friday night—he missed that pay envelope which had become part of his life. However, always a careful man, he had saved a pound or two for a rainy day. He felt stranger still on the following Friday when he lined up at the Employment Exchange for the first week's benefit—eighteen shillings for himself, five for his wife, and two shillings for each of his three children under fourteen. Twenty-nine shillings ! And his weekly wage had been three pounds. The weeks roll by until all his savings have gone, and George is reduced to the twenty-nine shillings a week. He can, if he likes, apply for Guardians' relief, but he is far too proud. He is already beginning to look shabby, and his boots are worn. What is worse, he knows that his children are going short of the little things they had been accustomed to. Were it not for the resourcefulness of his wife—who is worrying all day long—in refurbishing old clothes, they would soon be in rags. For the first time in his life the rent gets in arrear ; he decides that the watch dad bought him on his twenty-first birthday, and the chain his wife bought him in the courting days, must go to 'uncle's.' He passes the pawnbroker's door many times before he summons sufficient courage to dive in. 'How much ?' gruffly asks the pawnbroker, as George, with trembling hands, gives him the watch. 'Two pounds,' says George falteringly. 'Two pounds !' shouts the man. 'What do you think we are, a philanthropic institution, or the Bank of England ? I'll lend you twenty-five bob.' George, blowing hot and cold, assents, takes the cash and ticket, and rushes into the street. In the course of time he gets hardened to it. One by one the little bits of jewellery—his ring, tie-pin, his wife's ring, watch, brooch, bangles—trinkets which had been love offerings in the days before they wed—find their way to 'uncle's.' Then the clock, pictures, etc., until everything pawnable has gone, even the wedding ring. The piano, which Jessie had been learning to play, the sideboard, and the bureau had already been sold to a second-hand

dealer at a third of their value. The rent being too much, first one room is given up, then another, until the six of them are poked up in two rooms. The wages Jessie gets from the office in which she works help a little. Lily will soon be fourteen, and, much as he would have liked her to remain at school for another two years, she must needs go to work to help keep the family whilst dad is out of work.

George has now been out of work for six months. He looks very old. His shirt, collar, coat, and trousers are frayed. He pays periodic visits to Brown and Robinson's, and to Frank Wilkins, but without success. He has applied to every conceivable firm likely to employ him, but, even where there is any chance of a job, the foremen look askance at his shabby appearance and downcast mien. Unsympathetic neighbours nod meaningly as he passes. 'Yes!' they will say to each other. 'Just think of it! He's been out of work more than six months. Shouldn't think he wants a job, should you?' Some of his workmates avoid him; others buy him drink and occasionally slip a couple of shillings in his hand. Unemployment benefit ceases, and, very reluctantly, he applies for Poor Law relief. Many times he goes home after tramping the streets, heartbroken at the many rebuffs, and tired through walking miles without food. He sobs in despair, and the wife endeavours to cheer him. 'It's no use, mate. I can't get a job, and God knows I've tried. I don't think I shall ever work again.' Sometimes, alas, his pals buy him several drinks, which soon affect his ill-nourished body, and he goes home half tipsy, and very irritable. Gradually he stops looking for work, not because he has ceased to desire it, but because he has lost all heart through repeated rebuffs and disappointments, and the resultant suffering has prematurely aged him. Moreover, so long has he been idle that he has completely lost confidence in himself. 'Even if I get a job, I shan't know how to start on it,' he thinks, and not altogether without reason. He has become unemployable, and his family eke out a semi-starvation sort of existence on Poor Law relief, the children's wages, and gifts from friends. Such is the lot of many decent men, who, although they have ceased to search for work, would eagerly accept a job if one were found for them. They are not 'work-shies'; they are men cursed with the inferiority complex, in consequence of which they were unfitted to battle in the quest for work.

Since writing the above I have read that a Mr. C. E. Siddall, presiding the other day at the Annual Meeting of the Sheffield Forge

and Rolling Mills Co., Ltd., said : ' As long as the "dole" remains, twenty thousand people will continue to walk the streets of Sheffield.' Well, well ! It may appear to be very harsh treatment, but methinks two or three months' unemployment, with only the 'dole' to exist on, would cause Mr. Siddall drastically to amend his views concerning the out-o'-works.

But, in spite of the terrible hardships resulting from unemployment, I am by no means certain that it would be an excellent thing if everyone had a 'job for life.' On the contrary, I firmly believe that it would be all to the good if everybody had an occasional spell of unemployment—and I do not say this because I happen to have been out of work and would like others to so suffer. Provided one does not slide down the slippery slope into the ranks of the unemployed, the quest for work tends to widen the vision, to develop self-reliance and initiative, and enables one to be more tolerant to one's fellows. The man who has come through a period or two of unemployment is a far better type of individual than he who has been in the same job since leaving school, and is usually a better workman ; he learns to value his job. One may meet with wonderful experience whilst in search of a job ; unexpected rebuffs from some, and equally unexpected kindnesses from others. Commercial and mercenary as the present age is, the milk of human sympathy still flows abundantly in the breast of most people. And if the work-seeker be something of a philosopher, he will get some fun out of it. Let me relate just a few of my personal experiences.

Looking for a job to-day is entirely different from what it was before the advent of Employment Exchanges, particularly in the engineering and building industries. Nowadays, if employers want men, they send their requirements to the local Exchange, or advertise. Consequently, men seeking work rely principally on the Employment Bureau, and answering advertisements. If I were unemployed to-day, I certainly would not traipse all over London on the off chance of getting engaged ; I would register at the Exchange, watch the papers, and inquire amongst my friends. But years ago it was customary for employers to take men on at the gate, and for men to tour round the shops, seek foreman or manager, and boldly ask for work. Now, asking for a job may seem simple to the uninitiated, but, believe me, it needs some courage. I have seen great hefty men, who could give a good account of themselves in a rough-and-tumble, tremble like an aspen leaf when interviewing a prospective employer. I know I was in an awful funk at first, but one soon

gets used to it. The thing was to get hold of someone in the firm, and if you failed to get your man before he entered the gates, you had to be resourcefully strategic to get past the gate-keeper, who usually had instructions to tell all applicants for work that there were no vacancies. There was an art in it.

I remember calling at a factory where a lad was in charge of the office. My request to see the manager was met with the information that there were no vacancies. In a dictatorial manner I told him I desired to see the manager on very important business. That gentleman was obviously annoyed when he found I was merely a work-seeker, and he very curtly informed me that there were never any vacancies in his works, because he never discharged his workmen. 'In that case,' said I, taking my departure, 'it is useless my calling again unless one of your men happens to die.'

There was one big factory, the chief foreman of which had a reputation for being a firebrand, and the gate-keeper was a big burly bully, who seemed to take a fiendish delight in shouting at all job-hunters. Being in need of a job, I decided to outwit them by applying in the office, so one fine morning I boldly walked in and asked to see the chief foreman. Upon being asked the nature of my business, I said it was private and urgent. The way that foreman raved and swore at me. 'I thought you wanted to see me on urgent private business,' he bawled. 'Well,' said I calmly, 'isn't getting work urgent, and is it public business?' 'Well, I'll go to h——. What blank cheek. What are you?' 'A turner,' said I. 'I could do with a turner, and I've a good mind to take you on for your cheek.' 'Don't spoil a good mind,' said I—'you might do worse.' I started next morning, and the irascible old chief turned out to be one of the best men I ever worked for.

On another occasion, in reply to a written application, I was invited to call and interview the works manager. I duly presented myself, and, whilst waiting, overheard the manager telling the clerk to show me to the board room. This was a very unique procedure—we generally had to wait on the mat—so I acted accordingly. I selected the most comfortable chair in the board room, crossed my legs, took out a paper, and comfortably awaited the coming of the manager. When he arrived, I rose, bade him good morning, and resumed my seat. I got the job all right—I think I talked him into it.

The experienced work-seeker had to be something of a psychologist. He had to know who was the best man to see, the best time to catch him, how to approach him, and the nature of the

work done at that particular shop. As a rule, the best time was in the morning before the day's work commenced. Failing that, about two hours later, which gave the boss time to look round the shop. After ten was useless, but a most favourable time was after lunch. By then the 'heads' have usually got over the irritations of the day, and a good lunch may have put them in a good mood. All that was necessary was to see the right man at the right time in the right way, and endeavour to impress him with your capabilities by assuring him that you had been accustomed to that class of work for years. Luck is a factor which largely enters into the quest for work. A man may miss a job because the 'caddy' was in a bad temper, or preoccupied; another man may apply an hour later and strike lucky. Or it may be that the employer took a fancy to the applicant. I recall a case in point. A pal and I were touring round, and we decided to try our luck at a marine engineer's. We tossed a coin to decide who should go in, and I won. There was nothing doing, they were full up. It must have been intuition which prompted my chum to go in and apply. He came out with a face wreathed in smiles. It appeared that the foreman told him no, but, as he was leaving, the foreman called him back and asked him if he came from Newcastle, which he did. There ensued a chat about the old town, at the end of which the foreman opined that he could find my chum a few days' work, and told him to start in the morning.

I was having a particularly bad time about 1905, and things were very gloomy. One evening the shop steward from a local factory called on me, and told me to present myself for work next morning, and to ask for the foreman. Punctually at eight o'clock I presented myself at the gate of the Westminster Engineering Co., Ltd., with overalls and tools under my arm. The foreman, a kindly fellow, was ever so sorry, but there had been a mistake. It was quite true that he had asked Baker (the shop steward) to find him a turner, but the manager had written to someone else, who had not yet arrived. If he did not turn up I should have the job. I was invited to call an hour later. With tears dangerously near my eyes, I came away, roundly cursing my ill luck. When I returned, the other man, who, by some strange coincidence, was a pal of mine, had already started. That *was* a disappointment!

On another occasion I was standing outside the gates of Thornycroft's shipyard at Chiswick, patiently waiting to see the foreman, when a man came out and said: 'Ah! you're Watson. I thought I recognised you—you belong to Chiswick branch, don't you?

Are you after a job? What are you? A turner? Well, I think old Cook wants one. Wait here, I'll send him out to you.' Sure enough, 'old Cook' did want a man, and I started that evening on the night shift.

The most remarkable experience I ever had happened when I was passing through another black patch, and was getting to the end of my tether. No 'seventeen bob' from the 'Labour' in those days. I had travelled from the East End of London to Willesden—no mean journey when one had to walk most of the way—and had called on most shops in the locality. Full up, no hands wanted, sometimes spoken kindly, more often harshly, was the reply in each case, and by half-past ten I was thoroughly fed up and depressed. For a good quarter of an hour I stood hesitating outside the premises of a firm of tea weighing-machine manufacturers, wondering whether it was worth while ringing the bell. A lad came out to clean the brass plate, and I asked him if the boss was about. No. The boss was in France, but Mr. Kemp, the works manager, was in if I liked to see him. I liked; and when Mr. Kemp learned the nature of my business, he looked me up and down, asked me how long I had been 'out,' and whether I was experiencing a rough time. I told him the truth. After a brief talk about the bad state of trade he said rather hesitatingly, 'Well, yes, I think I can fix you up.' With joy in my heart, I thanked him, saying I would start in the morning. 'Start in the morning!' he exclaimed. 'Why in the morning? Can't you start now? From what you tell me you can do with it.' 'I can do with it all right,' said I, 'but I have no tools; besides, I have no money for food.' 'You come in and start now, my lad. You can easily borrow what tools you want in the shop, and I will see that you get a shilling or two for dinner.' It should be remembered that we are paid by the hour. The curious thing about this incident was that there was no lathe vacant. I was put on a drilling machine, usually a boy's job—which convinces me that Mr. Kemp gave me a job out of pure sympathy. Should this happen to meet his eye, he will know that I have never forgotten his kindly action.

The smooth, placid life of the man who is in a 'regular job' is by no means an enviable one. He may have missed the worries arising from unemployment, but he has also missed those beautiful touches of unostentatious sympathy extended to a pal in adversity. Having missed these things, the 'job-for-life' man is apt to be a bit selfish and insular.

I had spent a disappointing and wearisome day in the city, and had broken my last shilling for the tube fare home. There was little cash in the house, and the prospects for the morrow were short commons. As I entered the car, I was greeted with a hearty 'Hullo, Watson!' For the life of me I could not place the man, but it appeared that we had worked together in some movement or other a few years previously. When he bade me good night and good luck, I found he had pressed two half-crowns in my hand, and hurried away before I had time to thank him.

On another occasion I was disconsolately mooching around King's Cross like Wilkins Micawber, waiting for something to turn up. I ran into a friend whom I had not seen for five years, and whom I had assisted in more prosperous times. We had a drink together and a chat, and then, 'Good night, Bill, I hope you soon drop into something.' And away he went leaving a ten-shilling note behind him. On yet another occasion I bumped into an old workmate I had not seen for ten years. He had been to Australia, returned to England, and had secured a fairly good job. In a corner of a cosy tavern we chatted about old times until the Law insisted that we should depart. When the time came for us to part, old Jack handed me a piece of paper, saying 'Here's my address, Bill. Write to me when you get time.' 'Right oh, Jack!' putting the paper in my pocket. 'Good night, old man.' 'Good night, Bill—I wish you luck.' And he disappeared into the darkness. Curious to know where he lived, I stopped at the first lamp-post—the piece of paper was a pound note. Like a great booby, I cried. I have never yet found out who it was that slipped a pound note in my letter box one night.

These are just four of many cherished memories of the quest for work. Commonplace incidents? Well, maybe. But not to one who is being buffeted about on the waves of adversity, and who possibly knows not whence the next day's food is coming!

We all want to see the unemployment problem solved; we all desire the abolition of poverty and destitution. In the interests of industry, and of the race, every able-bodied citizen should be employed in some useful occupation. But, withal, I cannot help thinking that it would be a dreadfully dull, dreary, and monotonous old world if we all had a 'job for life.'

To the bold, healthy, venturesome spirit, the quest for work, with all its rebuffs, disappointments, and vicissitudes, is wonderfully attractive.

THE SPARROWFIELD PAPERS.

BY F. H. DORSET.

NO. 3. MR. D'ARCY, DIPLOMAT.

SPARROWFIELD is still the fair ground of individual tradesmen who remember one's likes and dislikes, and in several cases themselves reside in duplicates of Our House. So far we have not become lazy victims of a general store capable of offering indifferently prunes and pantehnicons. D'Arcy's Stores is our largest effort in that direction, supplying groceries, patent medicines, and domestic and garden ironmongery, but it draws the line at drapery (sold by the Bon Marché next door) and meat (purveyed by Mr. Fotheringay).

We keep our shops, we of the new suburb, neatly herded together in a row of nominally picturesque buildings jointly labelled, in large gold lettering, 'The Parade'—a name which, I humbly submit, is singularly inapt. It suggests something spacious, first cousin to a seaside esplanade, or at least a pantiled walk whereon to saunter past inviting shops in an historic inland spa. Who wants to 'parade' along a few yards of imperfectly awninged pavement commonly blocked by perambulators? One might as reasonably call Oxford Circus 'Dreamland.'

Still 'The Parade,' though unsuitable for strolling meditation or martial strides, has its conveniences and simplifies our shopping considerably, for we are able to do our marketing in a straight line, avoiding divagation, and to park perambulators *en masse*, firmly strapped occupants and all, in perfect safety. We can begin with groceries or hardware at D'Arcy's, work through drapery and meat, order vegetables at Mr. Percy's (a gentleman of marked characteristics, racial and individual), buy walking shoes at Trotman's, take morning coffee at the Sparrowfield branch of the British Dairy Co., where the manageress is named Beer, and culminate with a shingle-trim at the Maison Daudet, where a real Frenchman, born a British subject, and talking fluent Cockney, will attend to you himself if you are lucky; and all our shopping will be highly conversational. Mr. Percy, in particular, is sure to have something to say, probably about archaeology, but Mr. D'Arcy, if you listen to him dealing with half a dozen different customers, will show

you the fine art of salesmanship. It is impossible to be annoyed with Mr. D'Arcy, even if you have cause for complaint. I heard Mr. Bellamy, who is quite an expert at squabbling, attempt to have a row with him about bacon only this morning, and he ended up by buying butter.

Mr. D'Arcy is pontifical. At the first hint of complaint or argument with any of his four assistants he looms up, white-aproned, from the hinterland of his shop, and deals deftly with the situation. He never forgets anybody's soft spot, and always handles new customers skilfully until he finds it. Then, unless you are very strong-minded, he has you at his mercy, as witness the case of Mr. Bellamy.

I heard him and Mr. Bellamy with my own ears while I was buying twelve yards of wire-netting and a pound of sliced tongue to be sent up before one o'clock because Mrs. Bland-Mocking was coming to lunch and the Man with the Pipe, not happening to be in Town, wanted to be busy in the garden. That is the worst of the Man with the Pipe, he does run away so. She asked herself, over the 'phone, and the Man with the Pipe made a low remark and said we'd better get it over, and I said she'd have to endure the pot-luck she said she expected and feed off cold beef if enough remained from last night's joint. There wasn't, which was why I was buying sliced tongue in addition to wire-netting when Mr. Bellamy tried to have a row with D'Arcy.

Mr. Bellamy truly likes rows, goes about arranging things for the good of the suburb, and has quarrelled with nearly everybody of importance in turn. Afterwards he meets them amicably and is surprised because they still remember remarks he's forgotten all about. He is smallish, dark, quite clever, and the best man at a monologue I ever heard. He will go on until a whole tea-party is silenced, and all the time he will be walking about offering people cake. When he has finished speaking, if it's his own house he will turn on the loud-speaker or else a gramophone, so no one can answer back; if it's someone else's house he looks at the clock and has to leave for an appointment. He does a great many kindnesses, and could not be financially mean to save his life, but he usually manages to offend those he helps, and then he is dreadfully hurt; but the idea of any sort of apology anywhere to anybody is beyond him.

He came briskly into the shop, blind to everything but the matter in hand, oblivious of my polite greeting, and laid down on the marble-topped counter sacred to butter and lard six rashers of

bacon shrouded in grease-proof paper. He said to the lad behind the counter, 'Kindly ask Mr. D'Arcy what he meant by sending me six pork chops for breakfast when I ordered a pound of thin rashers.'

Mr. D'Arcy loomed suddenly into view, smiling.

'Good morning, sir,' he said cheerfully; 'and what do you require?'

'Bacon!' said Mr. Bellamy, slapping the packet of stout rashers with the flat of his hand; 'bacon, not salt pork! Not Danish pig!'

'I beg your pardon, sir,' replied Mr. D'Arcy; 'allow me!' and he rescued the flattened package and examined its contents professionally.

'Ah!' he ejaculated, 'I see what has occurred! Moxon, how did you come to deliver Mrs. Gower's order to Mr. Bellamy? You understand his taste as well as I do.'

Moxon didn't know, but Mr. Bellamy did. It was because of the crass ignorance and indifference characteristic of D'Arcy's Stores. He called his absent wife, still away over the week-end, to witness that of late, because D'Arcy imagined he had secured their custom, his Stores had supplied them with goods inferior to those ordered. Now that sort of thing didn't pay. It was a short-sighted policy. The last order before the bacon had produced some revolting cheese; stuff like soap, only fit to wash clothes with—disgusting! And greatly inferior biscuits—beastly biscuits . . . he nearly brought the tin round too. Dog-biscuits described them as nearly as they could be described. Filthy things . . . At this point, gently insistent, Mr. D'Arcy stepped into the gathering volume of description.

'Beg your pardon I'm sure, sir, but we have not supplied you with either cheese or biscuits throughout the past week.'

'I have the receipted bill in my pocket,' retorted Mr. Bellamy triumphantly. 'If this sort of thing goes on I shall transfer my custom to Bantling's.'

Bantling's is a rival grocery, just over the border of Our Suburb, but D'Arcy did not wince. He still smiled insistently.

'Again begging your pardon, sir,' he repeated, 'but might I see that bill? As you know, sir, I make a personal study of my customers' tastes, and I make up our books myself each week. To-day being Monday and all last week's orders having just been gone through personally, I am convinced that Mrs. Bellamy ordered neither cheese or biscuits. Why, sir, I retained you the last pound of your special Gorgonzola on the chance of your requiring it!'

There was pain in his voice. Mr. Bellamy looked grim, and produced a folded scrap of thin paper from his pocket.

'I believe this came with the goods,' he said. 'Mrs. Bellamy being away for the week-end, my cook purchased them. I spoke to her on the matter, and she handed me the account. It's no use hedging, D'Arcy, or grinning at me. All you grocers are alike; serve us well until you think you've got our custom and then any muck will do. You don't deserve to get on. Dammit, I know more about your own business than you do!' He thrust the bill at Mr. D'Arcy as if he were knifing him in the waistcoat. There was a little silence and a faint rustle of unfolded paper.

'Well, sir,' said Mr. D'Arcy cheerfully, 'you'd better take this bill to Bantling's and ask *them* about it.'

'What?'

'A little mistake on your part, sir. Occasioned, no doubt, by your cook shopping hasty-like on her Saturday evening out, during Mrs. Bellamy's absence. Perhaps you did not notice, sir, the reading to the bill. Allow me to say that it was very flattering to us that you should never have imagined any of your groceries having been ordered elsewhere. A tribute to the usual 'igh standard of our goods, that's how I look at this little occurrence.'

Mr. Bellamy said a very short word and examined the bill. He also added a remark about the cook. Then he said he'd mislaid his glasses, which accounted for misreading the bill. Then he said that anyhow that didn't account for the pork chops which Mr. D'Arcy had the audacity to call bacon, and which some benighted customer of gross appetite preferred to thinnest-cut Wiltshire. Mr. D'Arcy said that some people's tastes were unaccountable. He knew a man who took salt in his tea. Most peculiar. Moxon, are Mr. Bellamy's rashers ready? Then send them round at once; and what about the pound of that Gorgonzola and a few special rusks to go with it? New kind, in to-day, and he could guarantee their excellence. Ah, yes, *and* butter. Best dairy, just in: two shillings a pound. Round at once. Quite so, sir. Such a piece of carelessness should never occur again. Mr. Bellamy was a gentleman who knew a good thing when he tasted it. Knew butter, for instance, when he saw it. Would he observe this quality, for instance? Beautiful, wasn't it? Yellow as buttercups and guaranteed free of all artificial colouring. Came from a farm direct to Mr. D'Arcy and was made under perfect conditions; in fact, by Mr. D'Arcy's own sister—a hobby of hers.

Mr. Bellamy's crest had gone down a little, but he was still annoyed. Mr. D'Arcy's smile widened into pure brotherliness while remaining completely respectful.

'Well, sir,' he concluded, 'I'll say no more, or you'll think I'm trying to butter you up.'

Involuntarily Mr. Bellamy smiled before he snorted. He left the shop, and I caught Mr. D'Arcy's eye.

'And the next thing, madam?' he asked me, once again pontifical.

'Haven't you even an ounce left of the best Gorgonzola, or has Mr. Bellamy had it all?' I asked.

'Madam,' he said reproachfully, 'we have just opened a fresh case. How much might you require?'

I wonder if anyone has ever succeeded in flooring Mr. D'Arcy? And whether Mr. D'Arcy *always* tells the truth?

NO. 4. GINGERBREAD, PLAIN.

Why *did* I allow Mrs. Bland-Mocking to come to lunch, all the way from Her House in Her Suburb to Our House in Our Suburb? It isn't as if she was really a friend, and I might have known how it would be. Because, of course, there are suburbs *and* suburbs, and ours is of the '*and*' kind. You simply can't call it anything but extremely middle-class with a tilt in a downright artisan direction.

But, you see, it was like this! A cousin asked Mrs. Bland-Mocking to call on us when we were in our Compressed Flat in a corner of Her Suburb, which might practically be called 'Town,' and after we had returned her call she asked us to lunch and adopted a rather friendly tone. We were just leaving the flat then, so we waited until we were settled in here to feed her in return, and somehow she couldn't come until she proposed herself over the telephone this morning. I'd have put her off, only the Man with the Pipe wanted to get her 'Over and done with.' He's never liked her, never really appreciated her, which is odd, because he is usually so quick to enjoy the little comedies of human nature, and Mrs. Bland-Mocking is so full of them. She used to amuse me rather, and I believed that she was really kind and didn't mean half she implied. Even now I'm not sure, but I *am* quite sure that she couldn't have existed in the really good old days of primitive mankind. Only civilised communities, whether ancient or modern, can have suffered

the development of that type, and even they must often have assassinated it. She takes the stiffening out of one's character and the joy out of one's soul. She brings to one a discontent which is not divine, and presents it with both hands wrapped up in silver paper.

I said before that in order to appreciate the civilised delights of Our House you need to know the true nature of life in the country without a car or a maid, and then life in a Compressed Flat with your own children. Similarly to understand the joy of mere tightness of cash you must have experienced real poverty—poverty that is shabby and empty and weighed down with dread. Go through that and emerge safely into Our Suburb and you know the true meaning of *joie de vivre*. And I really cannot see why one should not have ambition and still be contented as one goes along. If I am going to wait to enjoy life until I attain my ambition I am going to wait a precious long while, and it's silly, anyhow. Yet it will take me some hours to shake off the shadow of Mrs. Bland-Mocking. The Man with the Pipe escaped in time and spent the afternoon with his wire-netting, a hammer, and some trellis-work; but I was steeped in it, and some of it seems to have soaked into my soul. It makes me angry, and anger in relation to Mrs. Bland-Mocking is plainly idiotic. Besides, after all, what *did* happen, and what *did* she really say? Let's get down to the facts and account for this effect rationally.

She arrived punctually at one o'clock looking perfectly lovely. She *is* lovely. She is over fifty, a widow for the last ten years, with two grown sons doing well in the world and a good quiet income of her own. She makes-up not at all; her clear complexion is her own; she does not disguise the silver threads in her unshingled brown hair, and she is a perfect Gainsborough woman, ageless, with the art of just keeping near enough to prevailing fashions not to be singular and yet of retaining her picturesque quality as well. Instinctively you expect from her a gracious manner and a soft voice, and you seem to get them both. Her first appearance stirs in you a sense of national pride and homage to lost dignities. You feel that you could safely display her to all nations and challenge them to produce anything better in the way of aristocratic beauty. She is well-bred and will be exquisite to the day of her death, you feel sure of it. And you don't begin wondering all at once. The queer effect she produces is cumulative.

She sent her chauffeur home with orders to call for her at three

o'clock, and then she walked smiling from our little front gate to our little front door and shook hands with the Man with the Pipe and said, 'Really, I congratulate you on your garden. You *must* have worked hard!'

'This,' replied the Man with the Pipe, 'is only the *front* garden, you know.'

'You have more at the back! How very nice! My dear Mrs. Ann, forgive me for taking you suddenly like this, but time seemed to be passing without seeing your new home, and I am going away for a month next week. How are the dear boys?'

The dear boys were at school.

Conscious that our cold luncheon was already laid and the preliminary hot tomato soup (blessed be tinned stuff!) was warming quietly by itself in the kitchen, I led her upstairs and showed her over the castle of an Englishman. She said:

'And you run it all yourselves? Oh, a woman one day a week? My dear, you are *brave*!'

I ought to have felt flattered. Certainly I'd skirmished enough to hide our general inclination to untidiness before she came; but somehow the compliment failed to please. When you are feeling rather bucked with life it is flattening to be told that you are 'brave.' She walked to our little bay-window and looked across the road at the building which has begun opposite.

'What a pity you will lose this charming view!' she remarked. 'Did you know they were going to build there when you took this place?'

'Oh yes!' I said hastily; 'naturally! But the ground just beyond belongs to a big market-gardener, and I don't imagine he'll sell. We shall still see the apple trees.'

'You are more fortunate than most people in these new suburbs,' said Mrs. Bland-Mocking. 'It is astonishing how soon a place which begins by being almost country becomes streety.'

'I suppose,' I replied hopefully, 'that when you're living in it and it happens gradually you hardly notice it.'

'Oh quite! One becomes used to one's environment,' answered Mrs. Bland-Mocking.

She was referring, of course, to the possible loss of vistas, to curtailed peeps at apple-trees and the like, yet somehow her statement suggested that when one became used to the environment of Our Suburb one must have slipped a long, long way down the social scale. I came to her side and looked out, and then I saw that

somebody in a front garden farther down the road was talking over the dividing paling to somebody else still farther along, and that one of the ladies wore a dust-cap which possibly concealed curlers.

Well, after all, what about it ?

We had lunch. It wasn't a bad luncheon, though mainly cold and collected on the spur of the moment. Mrs. Bland-Mocking enjoyed it very much and commended the cooking. I didn't tell her that most of it came out of tins, but I knew that she knew. She conveyed it, somehow, and that tinned housekeeping is the last resort of a poor cook, though it can taste quite nice. She thought that everything we possessed, thought, and did was 'quite delightful,' but her praise implied that after twelve years or so of matrimony we were still a curiously childlike, entertaining, and inefficient couple ; quite a handicap to our children, who, because of our cowardly flight from endurance of a Compressed Flat in a really good locality, might now be condemned to play happily with the children of unknown quantities in Our Suburb. Edgewise and by counter-implication I strove to convey the fact that we knew the aforesaid quantities and found them pleasant, good-mannered, human ; that education nowadays involves learning to take human kind as you meet it. It was a fatiguing afternoon, a drain upon one's courtesy and wits. It made me Socialistic and Bolshevistic and mighty irritable. It picked little holes in Our House.

But she has gone, and the children will be home soon, and by the time we have had tea and watered the garden I shall feel better.

Nice things are children ; one's own, at any rate ; I do *hope* we shan't be a handicap.

(To be continued.)

*THE PRINCE CONSORT, THE EMPRESS FREDERICK,
AND WILLIAM II: A STUDY IN EDUCATION.*

THROUGHOUT Victoria's reign the Princess Royal, whether under her earliest title or as Crown Princess or as the Empress Frederick, was a well-known and popular figure. In her bright girlhood, her happy married life, her tragic widowhood, the sympathy of her native land was always with her. In Germany, too, she was to the people the true Englishwoman—hence her unpopularity. Even now that the star of her unkind son has set in such gloom, Germans who must know better—enemies, defenders, or judges of her son—agree in maligning his mother. The most warm-hearted of women is accused of being a cruel mother; the devoted wife of unnatural greed and ambition; the patriotic princess of treachery. That we hate those whom we have injured is as true as ever; but in this country at least we ought to do justice to the dead, whose sorrow was deep.

For her fate was tragic. Richly gifted by nature, the darling child in a large family, carefully trained to be the patroness and ruler of Liberal Germany, she survived her beloved husband for many years, frustrated in her ambitions, at enmity with her son, to die of cancer. Whence arose this gloomy ending to a brilliant dawn? this disappointment of her main object in life? Was it fault of character in herself or her son, fault of training, or merely bad luck? Perhaps an examination of her upbringing and of her son's will help to explain the melancholy failure of this brilliant and affectionate woman.

The Prince Consort was a good man, high-minded and conscientious, but his unpopularity, though undeserved, was not unnatural, for he was much of a pedagogue and a little of a prig—a true native of the 'land of damned professors.' He had fun but no humour, and therefore no sense of proportion. Educated at a little German Court and a little German university, he really believed, in spite of his personal modesty, that he and Stockmar between them, with perhaps Uncle Leopold of Belgium, knew all that was to be known about wisdom and virtue. It never seems to have occurred to him that the country to which he had come, then the

foremost in the world in the arts of government, sea-power, commerce, exploration, literature, could have anything to teach him, or that her statesmen and thinkers might possibly be wiser in some ways than the Coburg physician. The slightly cynical good humour which is such a marked feature of the English character seemed to him frivolous ; and frivolity, so Stockmar declared, could lead nowhere. This unworldliness, this modest self-sufficiency, the fruit of a narrow upbringing and of good intentions, this passion for improving, exhorting, admonishing everyone with whom he came in contact prevented him from understanding others. Thus it was that some of his best-laid schemes went agley : that his heroic endeavours to strengthen the royal power only made republicanism more popular than before or since ; that his carefully trained son grew up not into a Tennysonian King Arthur but into an Edward VII.

By temperament and circumstance Prince Albert was an educator ; and in his large family he found a sphere entirely his own. Here he was not merely ' the Queen's foreign husband,' but father and mother too. Here were nine blank pages on which were to be written his own ideals : nine little featureless creatures to be shaped into his own image. Unluckily, as we all know, the Prince of Wales, whose training was his father's chief duty, was foredoomed by nature to disprove his father's theories. Of all princes Albert most despised and disliked his wife's uncles, the sons of George III ; and their faults, so Stockmar unyieldingly asserted, were due entirely to a bad education. Yet though affectionate and anxious to please, his luckless son grew every day more and more like his mother's family. How much misery would have been spared to the child, how much vain heart-searching to the parents, if the Prince (and his eldest daughter also in her turn) could have appreciated the profound and genial wisdom of the despised Lord Melbourne : if he could have subordinated his German theories to English common sense. ' Be not over-solicitous about education,' wrote Melbourne to the Queen after the birth of the Prince of Wales. ' It may be able to do much, but it does not do so much as is expected from it. It may mould and direct the character, but it rarely alters it.'

Disappointed in his eldest son, the Prince consoled himself with his success with his first-born, the Princess Royal. From very early times he and Stockmar had planned a future almost as influential and brilliant as her brother's for this darling child. Stockmar and

his Prince were first of all true Germans, firm Protestants, earnest Liberals. They foresaw, like most wise people, the union of Germany under the leadership of Prussia. But Prussia was the most militaristic, conceited, and illiberal (in the Continental sense of uncultured) of the German States. To substitute the rule of the enlightened professor for that of the Junker was the greatest service, so German Liberals believed, that could be rendered to their country. Old England and the Prince of Wales were, Prince Albert felt, too stubborn in character to be greatly changed by him, but he might still mould the fortunes of Germany. Prussia was the German Sparta: his daughter might make it a German Athens also.

With the training of his daughters the Prince was quite successful, for his desire to elevate and instruct did not antagonise the sex which is always more affectionate and anxious to please than its brothers. From her infancy his eldest daughter was his favourite. Her warm-hearted impulsiveness and gaiety thawed his reserve: her brilliant precocity—'the cleverest woman I ever knew,' her brother called her—delighted his ambition. Even her faults were interesting to his pedagogic mind. He had none of the English dislike of over-pressure, and accordingly while still a little child she quite terrified her governess, Lady Lyttelton, by her learning and intelligence. Thus was engendered an intense nervous irritability which was the cause of most of her faults and most of her unhappiness. From babyhood she was passionate and uncontrolled: 'over-sensitive and affectionate and rather irritable,' Lady Lyttelton calls her. With sad prophetic insight her governess sees in her 'a pretty mind, only very unfit for roughing it through a hard life, which hers may be.' Here, indeed, character was destiny.

She grew up a highly cultured but perfectly unaffected girl, full of life and spirits, and most warmly attached to her family and home. The future American President, Mr. Buchanan, described her as the most charming girl he had ever met, 'all life and spirit, full of frolic and fun, with an excellent head, and a heart as big as a mountain.'

Few fathers who loved a child so much would have had the resolution to exile her so young, the Princess being betrothed when fifteen and married at seventeen. For the Prince's love for his daughter was real, not a mixture of pride and ambition as so much paternal love is. 'I am not of a demonstrative nature, and therefore you can hardly know how dear you have always been to me,

and what a void you have left behind in my heart : yet not in my heart, for there assuredly you will abide henceforth, as till now you have done, but in my daily life, which is evermore reminding my heart of your absence,' he wrote on the day after she left England. But duty was his guiding star, and his daughter, like himself, must fulfil her destiny, even at the cost of exile and too early maturity. Like most people of melancholy temperament and prosperous life he greatly underestimated the real troubles of this world. Confident in the education and the husband he had given his daughter, never realising how much he owed to the chivalry of his wife's ministers and to the loyalty of her people, he anticipated for his daughter nothing worse than home-sickness and the usual trials of wedded life. Happily for himself he never realised that the frankness and impetuosity which he loved in her were the very worst preparations for her future career. He could not foresee the thirty years' wait for the crown ; he did not realise that Prussian envy of great and prosperous England and the all-powerful minister's hatred of female influence would surround her with a malicious hostility such as he had never met.

Though the Princess Royal declared that she had been hated from the first in her new home, contemporary eye-witnesses thought differently. Indeed, her father-in-law and the Berliners must have been hard to please if they had not welcomed the lively girl-bride. Yet in seven years all was changed, and King, ministers, and people were all estranged from her. How did this happen ?

In the first place, the Crown Princess though clever was not wise. She could not read character, and her habit of forming enthusiastic friendships ('pashes' as schoolgirls call them) and then becoming disillusionised lost her many friends. Coming as an outspoken and open-hearted girl from a free and happy home, she fell an easy victim to the intrigues of a Court where she was hated as an Englishwoman in the midst of friends of Russia. Besides, as Bismarck maliciously noted, she was timid under all her impetuosity, and this prevented her gaining any influence over her father-in-law, embarrassed and astonished as she must have been by the perpetual squabbles between him and his wife. The liking for everything English, the desire to reform Prussian etiquette and culture on English lines—those same tendencies which in her German father and in England had roused nothing worse than ridicule, in the daughter and in parvenu Prussia bred envy and hatred. Her entire empire over her husband could not please his family, and

made Bismarck her enemy, just as in later years it infuriated her eldest son.

All this might have been overcome but for her resolution in carrying on her mission, bequeathed her by her idolised father, to liberalise Prussia. Within seven years of her marriage she had persuaded and forced her husband into placing himself at the head of the Liberal party in open opposition to his father. Thenceforward the old King could never forgive his daughter-in-law for estranging him from his only son, and his reliance on Bismarck was strengthened. Still bitterer was the war which ensued with Bismarck and all he stood for. Bismarck, 'the man of blood and iron,' hater of petticoat influence, loyal to the dynasty only because it supported him, detesting Liberalism as a weak flabby spirit disintegrating the Germany he was building up, believing only in material force—how could he do other than hate the woman who ruled the heir to the throne and who stood for everything he despised? And since, in spite of his great gifts and achievements, Bismarck—like Napoleon—was 'no gentleman,' no libel on 'the Englishwoman' was too mean for his Press, no lie too absurd to be swallowed by the Prussians. Few people were less suited to contend with such a wily and rough enemy than the Crown Princess. No amount of suffering could teach her prudence and tact. Her very freedom from prejudice, the quality in which her father delighted, made her disliked. As her brother said, she was an Englishwoman in Germany and a German in England. Besides, like her father, she overestimated the direct power of the Crown, and greatly underestimated its indirect power based on popularity. For popular applause she relied on her good works rather than on outward attractions; and the Prussians had no love for advanced women. The Prince Consort's widow lived to find that 'nothing could be done in Germany without popularity'; but his daughter—his other self, but without his prudence—only realised it to resent it, to feel that she could 'smash the idiots' who doubted her loyalty to her husband's country.

Which of them was right—Bismarck or the Princess? During their life-time Bismarck's stupendous success silenced criticism. But surely, now that Prussia has felt the impact of the 'mailed fist' on her own head rather than on the French pate, Liberalism should revive. Surely there is much to be said for the belief that a constitutional and peaceable Prussia would have been stronger than a Junker-ridden, despotic Prussia. Even in private life the two

antagonists exemplify the lesson of the Sermon on the Mount—Woe to the successful. Compare their old age: the Empress Frederick comforting herself with her children and grandchildren, her charities, her possessions, the arts; and the misanthropic old hero, covered with fame and honours, but eating out his heart in rage and revenge against the young Emperor who had retorted his lessons in ingratitude on himself. Unfortunately many German publicists since the war, with Emil Ludwig at their head, are still Bismarck worshippers. They object not to William II's imitating Bismarck, but to his imitating him so badly. They still pursue his mother with libel and innuendoes as the root-cause of Prussia's trouble. The change of heart in Germany is still far off.

What was the real cause of William II's hatred for his mother, to which Ludwig and other of our new historical psychologists trace his hatred of England and the beginning of the Great War? Ludwig bluntly declares that the Crown Princess hated her first-born on account of his deformity, that she openly sneered at it to his enemies, and that therefore the heartless brutality with which he treated his parents was their own fault. He brings absolutely no evidence to support this except the Crown Princess's reference to her 'uncouth lumpish son' in contrast with the 'intelligent and graceful' Rudolf of Austria—an outburst uttered long after the feud between mother and son had begun. Against it is her character, and the many loving references to the child in her family's correspondence. If there was any deep-seated grudge of this nature, who was the more likely to feel it—the warm-hearted mother or the self-centred boy smarting under the burden of his deformity?

We need not, however, because it is absurd to call the Crown Princess an unnatural mother, think she was altogether a wise one. The fact is that the Princess was married too young. Like most very young mothers, she was exacting, and applied all her father's theories of education to her own flock with still greater rigidity. She failed to realise that the affections need cultivation, that not every child is born with a loving heart. While acknowledging that she was a most indulgent mother to her three youngest children, born after the death of her two younger sons, William II complains that she was severe to the three elder ones. Gossip says that there was a feud between the two sets, the elder calling themselves 'we Germans' and the younger 'we English.' On the other hand, her lady-in-waiting affirms that she loved all her children passionately as babies, but resented their growing up, and it is certain that in her

almost morbid grief for her two dead boys she underestimated their brothers.

Here, in the wounded self-love of the child, is to be found, we fear, the true explanation of William's dislike for his mother. How the child of such parents came to be born so cold-hearted we cannot say, but cold he was, and nothing was done to remedy that defect. It is probable that his vigorous young mother never realised the torture caused him by the treatment for his withered arm or the miseries of those riding-lessons which one cannot read of even now without a shudder. Emerging from a not happy childhood, he was handed over to Hinzpieter, whom even Stockmar considered an unpractical crank quite unable to sympathise with child-nature. Thus a child in whom vanity amounted to a disease seems to have received from his mother little of the praise really due to his courage and tenacity, and to have suffered many criticisms.

In fact, the Crown Princess was repeating and underlining the mistakes her father had made in the treatment of his own eldest son. There was the same theory that a child could be moulded as you will by education, the same impatience when his nature refused to be so moulded. This time a little Hohenzollern was to be turned into a cultured Liberal, leading his subjects in the arts of peace. And just as an unsuitable education gave Edward VII a keener relish for dissipation, so it made William II more arrogant, heartless, and militaristic than he might otherwise have been, especially as he had not his uncle's kindness to keep his nature sweet. Behind it, too, is that jealousy of their adult heir, which it is difficult for young and vigorous parents not to feel. Yet could the Princess have changed her son's nature by a different system of education? That devouring vanity which has ruined him could only be soothed by constant flattery, which no conscientious parent could give. And lastly, the son and mother were, in some part of their character, too like each other to agree: too tactless, excitable, superficially brilliant, and strong-willed; while the son's vanity, conventionality, and coldness were abhorrent to the mother. Besides, William II was essentially weak and therefore unchivalrous: his brutality to his mother, his unkindness to his sister, his neglect of the wife chosen and commended simply because she was the direct opposite to his mother, his repeated rudeness to the grandmother whom he professed to revere—all tell the same tale. He despised his father for being ruled by his wife and hated his mother for ruling him.

Thus we come to the tragedy which closed the Empress

Frederick's wedded life. The son, whose education was to have completed her life's work, defiantly made a cult of the minister who had excluded his mother from power for thirty years. Then came the Crown Prince's fatal illness just as the Pisgah-view of the crown dawned upon his sight; his wife's frantic refusal to recognise it; Bismarck's secret advice to call in an English doctor, followed by his open innuendoes that in so doing she had sacrificed her husband's life to gratify her ambition to be Empress; her arrest by her own son as soon as the breath was out of his father's body; and that son's repudiation of his sister's betrothal in defiance of his father's dying wish—an act of unkindness which has borne its natural fruit in her recent foolish *mésalliance*.

Of the Prince Consort's educational aspirations we can say:

‘The gods reluctant grant but half his prayer,
The rest the winds disperse in empty air.’

It is difficult to imagine a more complete frustration of any wishes than those of the Prince, that his daughter might create a Liberal Prussia, and that his grandson might not grow up ‘a conceited Prussian.’ But his faith in the omnipotence of love and purity was better founded than his educational theories, and bore better fruit for his children. Possibly his eldest grandchild has learned in exile what he never realised before, that ‘what does not pass away, and is alone of value here below, is the old love and constancy of heart and mind.’

MARGERY LANE.

LITERARY ACROSTICS.

THE Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers prizes to the value of at least £3 to the most successful solvers of this series of four Literary Acrostics. There will also be consolation prizes, two or more in number: the winners of these will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. And, further, every month a similar prize of books will be awarded to the sender of the correct solution that is opened first.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 66.

(The Second of the Series.)

'——, rest! thy —— o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking:
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.'

1. 'Few, few shall part where many meet!
The —— shall be their winding-sheet.'
2. 'The April's in her eyes; it is love's spring,
And these the showers to bring it on.'
3. 'Under the ponderous sea his body dips,
And Hero's name dies bubbling on his lips.'
4. 'I see thou art implacable, more ——
To prayers than winds and seas.'
5. 'Thou who hast
The fatal gift of beauty, which became
A funeral dower of present woes and past.'
6. 'Welcome her, all things youthful and sweet,
Scatter the blossom under her feet!
Break, happy land, into —— flowers!'

7. 'He carries weight! he rides a ——'
'Tis for a thousand pound!'

RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed on page x of 'Book Notes' in the preliminary pages of this issue.
4. At the foot of his answer every solver must write his pseudonym (consisting of one word), and nothing else. His name and address must also be given, and should be written at the back.
5. Solvers must on no account write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.
6. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.
7. Answers to Acrostic No. 66 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50A Albemarle Street, London, W. 1, and must arrive not later than February 20.

PROEM: Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*,
ii. 2.

LIGHTS:

ANSWER TO No. 65.			
1. S	tillnes	S	
2. M	orro	W	
3. E	as	E	
4. L	ittl	E	
5. L	igh	T	

1. Gray, *Elegy*.
2. Milton, *L'Allegro*.
3. Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*.
4. Pope, *Essay on Criticism*.
5. Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*.
Dedication.

Acrostic No. 64 ('Spirits Fathers') was very difficult, and no solver succeeded in finding the answer to every light. The chief difficulty was the fifth light, 'Impalpable,' which only one competitor gave; 'Padda' defeated most people, and 'Tailor' was also a stumbling-block, 'Tinker' being a very popular shot. There were 33 answers sent in: two solvers missed only one light, four missed two lights, and the others missed more than two.

RESULT OF THE SIXTEENTH SERIES.

The maximum score obtainable was 32. Lass and Tuchel, who scored 31, head the list; Bosky, Etheldreda, Omar, and Ubique, with 30, come next. One of these six solvers, Ubique, is now ineligible, and the other five win the prizes. Lass and Tuchel are awarded thirty shillings each; Bosky, Etheldreda, and Omar will choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. All the five winners will be unable to take prizes in the new (seventeenth) series, unless it should happen that one of them is the only competitor who sends a correct answer to one of the four acrostics.

Lass is Mrs. Steedman, Steventon Rectory, Basingstoke; Tuchel is Mr. T. Luck, 212 Tilehurst Road, Reading; Bosky is Miss E. Carleton Williams, Broomgrove, Goring-on-Thames, Oxon; Etheldreda is Miss B. S. Franey, The Grange, Ely, Cambs; Omar is Miss E. M. Oram, 1 Bolingbroke Grove, S.W. 11.

